

B. F. KEITH MEMORIAL THEATRE
539 Washington Street
Boston
Suffolk County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-1078

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MA-1078

B. F. KEITH MEMORIAL THEATRE
(Opera House)

Location: 539 Washington Street (with secondary access building at 163 Tremont Street), Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts.

USGS Boston South Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 19.330040.4690910

Present Owner: Opera House, Incorporated.

Present Occupant: Opera Company of Boston.

Present Use: Theatre for the presentation of grand opera.

Significance: The B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre is one of the finest examples of the moving picture palace at its highest stage of development. Designed in the grand Baroque manner by Thomas W. Lamb, one of the foremost theatre architects of his day, it was erected at the behest of Edward Franklin Albee (1857-1930) to memorialize his late partner, Benjamin Franklin Keith (1846-1914), co-founder of the Keith-Albee theatres and originator of the refined vaudeville entertainment that flourished from the turn of the century until the 1930s. The theatre gained added significance in 1978, when it was acquired by the Opera Company of Boston through the initiative of Artistic Director Sarah Caldwell as the home of grand opera for a major metropolitan area.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The building permit was issued on December 3, 1925. The cornerstone was laid on August 25, 1927. The theatre opened on October 29, 1928. The publicized cost was \$5,000,000. The seating capacity is approximately 2,900.
2. Architect: Thomas White Lamb (1871-1942). Apparently the most prolific of 20th-century specialists in theatre architecture was Thomas W. Lamb, who during his career designed over 300 theatres in all parts of the world. Lamb was born in Dundee, Scotland, and moved to New York as a young man. He studied architecture at the Cooper Union and worked in

New York City as a building inspector prior to entering the designing phase of his career. Lamb's earliest theatre commissions came near the turn of the century, and he early formed a long-lasting alliance with Marcus Loew, whose success as an exhibitor was closely coupled with Lamb's architectural success. Lamb also did considerable work for the Keith-Albee and Fox organizations as well as executing numerous independent commissions.

The entire history of picture-theatre architecture from the nickelodeon to the Art Deco palace is represented in Thomas Lamb's designs. While his earliest theatres, notably the Regent, New York's first high-class picture theatre, were in the heavy Baroque style of the vaudeville houses, Lamb soon turned for inspiration to the work of the brothers Adam, and his name became for some years synonymous with the Adam style in theatres. The growing popularity of moving pictures in New York City brought about a whole series of Adamesque Lamb theatres, the Strand, Rialto, Rivoli, and the 5,000-seat Capitol, the first movie theatre built on a truly palatial scale. In addition, there were the Albee in Brooklyn, Keith's 86th Street Theatre in Manhattan, and Loew's State Theatres in both New York and Cleveland.

During the second half of the 1920s, Lamb's work became much more varied in style. Speaking of this change, Lamb said,

I noted a lessening in the response of the average patron to the charm of architectural backgrounds patterned after the works of the Adam brothers. There was an underlying demand for something more gay, more flashy -- a development for which there is much precedent in the history of architecture. For this reason I began to favor in my design an entirely different style, leaning toward the periods of Louis XVI and the very rich productions in the Italian Baroque style.

In addition to the Louis XVI and Italian Baroque, this period saw Lamb houses in the Romanesque, Hindu, Persian, and Chinese styles, and even in the "atmospheric" manner (gardens, stars, and cloud effects) which Lamb successfully borrowed from architect John Eberson. Lamb's largest theatre of this period was the Fox in San Francisco, other notable examples being the Academy of Music, Loew's 72nd Street and 175th Street Theatres in Manhattan, Loew's Pitkin in Brooklyn, Loew's State in Syracuse, the Albee Theatre in Cincinnati, and the subject of this report, the magnificent B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre in Boston.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title from 1909 to 1980 for the property at 537-541 Washington Street. Reference is to the Suffolk County Register of Deeds.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
04/16/1909	Proprietors of the Boston Theatre	Mary C. Keith
Will undated	Mary C. Keith	Benjamin F. Keith
Will undated	Benjamin F. Keith	Andrew Paul Keith
Will undated	Andrew Paul Keith	William H. O'Connell, trustee
11/30/1923 Liber 4537 Page 71	William H. O'Connell	Keith's Boston Theatre Co.
08/10/1925 Liber 4712 Page 438	Keith's Boston Theatre Company	President and Fellows of Harvard College
08/08/1939 Liber 5805 Page 410	President and Fellows of Harvard College	Memorial Corporation
10/19/1945	Memorial Corporation consolidated with Keith Memorial Theatre Corporation.	
10/30/1945	Keith Memorial Theatre Corporation consolidated with Paragon Corporation.	
04/18/1968 Liber 8197 Page 631-6	Paragon Corporation	Beacon Hill Theatre, Inc.
10/19/1978 Liber 9108 Page 539	Beacon Hill Theatre, Inc.	Opera Company of Boston
04/16/1980 Liber 9421 Page 217	Opera Company of Boston	Opera House, Incorporated

The following is an incomplete chain of title from 1892 to 1980 for the property at 163 Tremont Street, which is joined by a subterranean passage beneath Mason Street, which separates them above ground, to the property at 537-541 Washington Street. Reference is to the Suffolk County Register of Deeds.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
12/12/1892 Liber 2100 Page 639	George R. White	Benjamin F. Keith
Will undated	Benjamin F. Keith	Andrew Paul Keith
Will undated	Andrew Paul Keith	William H. O'Connell, trustee
11/30/1923 Liber 4537 Page 71	William H. O'Connell, trustee	President and Fellows of Harvard College
08/08/1939 Liber 5805 Page 410	President and Fellows of Harvard College	Memorial Corporation
10/19/1945	Memorial Corporation consolidated with Keith Memorial Theatre Corporation.	
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4. Original plan and construction: Thirteen blueprints of original Lamb office drawings were presented to HABS by Sack Theatres in 1976. Photocopies of nine of the blueprints, or portions thereof, were made for this report. Except for

new exit stairs and fire escapes provided in 1944, and the complete remodeling of the Tremont Street elevation in 1946, no major changes were made until 1970-1971, when the dressing rooms were converted into 24 apartments. At that time, the theatre was "twinning" by the erection of a wall in the proscenium arch. The second auditorium was installed within the stage, while the original auditorium was not altered. In 1979-1980, the wall was removed, the theatre was renovated for use as an opera house, and the apartments were returned to their original function as dressing rooms, except for some now used as administrative offices by the Opera Company of Boston.

5. Alterations and additions: Among the building permits issued for alterations to the theatre were the following:

Dec. 1, 1936--Partition wall part way across shoe store arcade 8' 6" floor to ceiling.

Mar. 11, 1937--Increase size of door from 2'6"x6'6" to 3'7" in room outside of supt. room basement.

Jan. 11, 1938--Block up doorways from balcony of Bijou Theatre to staircase Keith's Theatre and from orchestra Bijou to gent's room Keith's with brick to full thickness to wall, 18' and 12', plastered both sides.

Feb. 18, 1944--Provide additional means of egress by installing new stairs and fire escapes.

Mar. 2, 1945--Build terra cotta partition under existing fire escape.

May 12, 1945--Erecting 2" x 2" x 1/4" steel frame on building which will hold a Johns-Manville board.

May 22, 1946--Relocate ticket booth and display frame.

Aug. 5, 1947--Interchange door to fire escape with adjacent window, extend fire escape platform to make more direct egress.

May 16, 1949--Build new candy stand in main lobby with steel canopy covered with wire lath and plaster.

Aug. 3, 1949--Candy counter and back bar both for the sale of candy at inner lobby.

Dec. 2, 1954--Extend show window 10'0" long, 3'0" wide to line up with bay window of adjoining stores in arcade.

June 3, 1955--Repair fire escape Mason St. elevation.

May 14, 1956--Repair & cement plaster south wall.

Apr. 12, 1960--Increase width of recesses in Washington St. front wall at street level to replace existing display frame with new frame 6" wider.

Jul. 22, 1965--Erect "V" shaped non-illuminated sign over existing marquee (temporary) new sign being made.

Jul. 29, 1965--Erect double-faced changeable letter attraction sign.

Nov. 20, 1968--Permission was requested to convert the Mason Street section of the building (the dressing rooms) into 24 apartments. The request was denied at that time but was later approved. The conversion was in progress in November 1970 and was completed in 1971. During that same period, the stage was walled off from the auditorium, and a second auditorium was built in the stage space. Access to the newer auditorium was from the arcade, or passage, that runs from the outer lobby to Mason Street. As noted above, the alterations of 1970-71 were removed in 1979-80, when the theatre was restored to its original form.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Benjamin Franklin Keith (January 26, 1846 - March 26, 1914) was born at Hillsborough, New Hampshire, the youngest of eight children born to Samuel C. and Rhoda Keith. At the age of seven he began to work on a western Massachusetts farm, remaining there for 11 years and attending the district school and village academy during the winter months. When he was 17, Keith was greatly attracted by a country circus which he had visited, and shortly thereafter he left for New York, where he found employment with Bunnell's Museum. He later worked for P. T. Barnum and with Adam Forepaugh's Circus, remaining in the circus business as employer and proprietor until the early 1880s. During that time he added to his theatrical experience by taking small shows on the road, thrice bankrupting himself in the process.

Keith's career as a vaudeville entrepreneur began in Boston. In January 1883 he opened the Gaiety Museum in partnership with

Colonel William Austin in a room only 15' x 35' that tapered to 6' at the rear. Those premises were immediately south of the Adams House Hotel adjoining the south side of the present B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre, now renamed the Opera House. The partnership with Austin soon dissolved, and the enterprise became "Keith and Batcheller's Mammoth Museum" with George H. Batcheller as Keith's new partner. The partners soon added an upstairs lecture hall with 123 seats, and it was there, above the hall of curios, that continuous performance vaudeville first began. In 1884 Batcheller left, and Edwin F. Albee, an old friend of Keith, joined to form a partnership in 1885 that lasted until the latter's death in 1914.

During the 1885-1886 season, the partners leased the Bijou Theatre and offered five daily performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" at ten cents a seat. From that time forward their business flourished. The Bijou Theatre, on the site of the Gaiety Theatre (not to be confused with Keith and Austin's Gaiety Museum), adjoined the south wall of the present B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre (Opera House). In 1894, Keith and Albee invested over \$600,000 in building the flagship house of their expanding chain of theatres, the B. F. Keith's New Theatre. That theatre, notable for its luxurious appointments and lavish decor, occupied a site behind the Bijou and also adjoined the south wall of the present B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre (Opera House).

The partners operated a chain of popular-priced vaudeville theatres furnishing refined entertainment to the public, and raised the standard of vaudeville from the coarse and vulgar variety shows that had hitherto been typical. In 1873, Keith had married Mary Catherine Branley, a very pious Roman Catholic whose moral concepts deeply influenced her husband. Risqué lines were not tolerated on Keith stages, and even so relatively innocuous a term as "slob" was banned. Albee, who was as devoted to physical cleanliness as he was to moral cleanliness in his theatres, strongly supported the policy of genteel censorship.

Keith and Albee induced legitimate-stage stars to appear in vaudeville and greatly improved performers' salaries and back-stage accommodations. By the turn of the century, the Keith Circuit had achieved a virtual monopoly of vaudeville entertainment in many areas and had successfully invaded the New York market. The partners maintained their position by forming the United Booking Office, an agency many of their chief rivals found it expedient to join. One of those rivals, Frederick Freeman Proctor, for whom Keith had scant regard,

became a partner in 1906, when the Keith and Proctor Amusement Company was formed. That uneasy partnership was dissolved in 1910. The United Booking Office continued until 1919, five years after Keith's death, when it was reorganized as the B. F. Keith Vaudeville Exchange. During his last years, Keith was apparently content to enjoy his fortune, and his name on an estimated nearly 400 theatres, leaving active participation in the business to Albee. Keith's wife, Mary Catherine, died in 1910, leaving one son, Andrew Paul Keith. On October 29, 1913, Keith married Ethel Bird Chase, but that marriage had little effect upon the disposition of his assets, most of which were given equally to his partner and his son to avoid inheritance taxes before his death on March 26, 1914.

Edward Franklin Albee (October 8, 1857 - March 11, 1930) was born at Machias, Maine, the son of a shipwright, Nathan S. Albee, and his wife Amanda. When Edward was four, his parents moved to Boston, where he grew up. His formal education ended at the age of twelve, and after a variety of odd jobs, he succumbed to the lure of a travelling circus when he was nineteen. He learned his showmanship during seven successive seasons with Barnum's "Greatest Show on Earth" before joining his friend Benjamin Franklin Keith in the autumn of 1885. The course of that famous partnership, which endured until Keith's death in 1914, has been briefly outlined above.

One of Albee's greatest contributions to American vaudeville was certainly his interest in the planning and construction of suitable theatres, of which there had been a widespread lack. The B. F. Keith's New Theatre of 1894 in Boston was only the first in a series of beautiful and commodious playhouses erected in the leading cities of the East and the Middle West. As Keith's chief of staff, Albee was also concerned with the working conditions of the actors under his management. The growing prosperity of the vaudeville circuits made a marked increase in actors' pay possible, and Albee, in planning new theatres, provided for better dressing rooms and other facilities.

This amazing man was a specialist in theatre construction. He was a fanatic when it came to sanitation and ventilating systems. His rest rooms were models of size and perfection. He is said to have invented the mushroom system of air conditioning where exhaust air was removed from under the auditorium seats, while fresh air was introduced at the ceiling level. In the summer the incoming air passed through chambers of ice, in winter through coils of steam pipes.

He introduced hotel-like dressing rooms in his new "palaces." He decorated his lobbies with valuable oil paintings, expensive antique furniture, and art objects. He loved red and gold decor from his circus days. He used quantities of marble where others used plaster. His theatres had much gilt, in some cases real gold leaf. (Donald C. King, "Keith, Albee, Et Al," Marquee, Vol. 7, No. 3, 3rd quarter, 1975), p. 8)

Andrew Paul Keith survived his father by only a little over four years. He died in 1918, a victim of the terrible Spanish influenza epidemic of that year. Upon his death, Albee fell heir to most of his assets, but some Keith holdings, including the Boston Theatre on the actual site of the present B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre (Opera House), were bequeathed elsewhere. The William H. O'Connell whose name appears as trustee in the chain of title was none other than His Eminence, William, Cardinal O'Connell, trustee for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. The next owner, the Harvard Corporation (President and Fellows), was then headed by President A. Lawrence Lowell. Thus, two of the most influential men in the nation in their respective fields of religion and education held the property in trust for their institutions. In 1919 the United Booking Office, which then had assets of nearly \$50,000,000, was re-organized as the B. F. Keith Vaudeville Exchange controlling between 350 and 400 theatres. The circuit later became the Keith-Albee-Orpheum, or K-A-O Theatres. In 1926 Albee bought the Pathé and F.B.O. film companies, and by 1927 his personal fortune was reported as \$25,000,000.

With the advent of sound films in 1927, the death knell of vaudeville was sounded, although the actual demise was still a few years in the future. In 1928 Albee was 70 years old, and Joseph P. Kennedy, father of the future President, bought up his stock. K-A-O became submerged in Radio-Keith-Orpheum, or R-K-O, an amalgam of the Radio Corporation of America, the Keith-Albee-Orpheum Theatre Circuit, the F. B. O. and Pathé picture companies, the R.C.A. Photophone sound system, Victor Records, and the National Broadcasting Company. Albee "stepped down" from the presidency to become a member of the R-K-O board of directors. That same year saw the opening on October 29, 1928, of the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre, which had been erected under the close personal supervision of Edward F. Albee as a final tribute to his late partner. On March 11, 1930, Albee died at Palm Beach, leaving his wife, the former Laura S. Smith, whom he had married on May 13, 1881, and two children, Ethel and Reed.

Site Almost no site in the United States has a longer theatrical history, and none has a more complicated history, than the Boston block bounded on the north by West Street, on the east by Washington Street, on the south by Avery Street, and on the west by Mason Street. In the 18th century, two taverns on the west side of Washington Street stood side by side, the Lamb Tavern adjoining the south side of the Lion Tavern. By 1835, the Lion Tavern was gone, and its site became the first within the block to be used for theatrical purposes. (The Lamb Tavern, then kept by Laban Adams, was replaced by a hotel, the Adams House, by the end of the 1850s.)

The estate formerly known as the Lion Tavern in Washington Street, having been purchased by the New York Zoological Institute, was converted into a spacious theatre within 'two short months;' and was opened January 11, 1836, under the stage management of Mr Barrymore. Equestrian performances being a novelty in the city, this theatre was patronized to a considerable extent in its commencement. (Abel Bowen, Bowen's Picture of Boston . . ., Boston, 1838, p. 198)

The orchestra or pit of the Lion Theatre was a ring for equestrian performances extending under three shallow tiers of boxes. During the summer of 1836 the wooden front building was replaced by a brick building with first-floor stores, its upper rooms later absorbed in the Adams House. The Lion Theatre was refitted as the Mechanics Institute, a lecture and concert hall in 1839 and was used by the Reverend Theodore Parker's congregation for a time. In December 1839 the theatre was renamed the Melodeon. Thereafter it continued under various name changes, Melodeon Varieties when Lola Montez appeared there in 1857, New Melodeon in 1859, Melodeon again in 1860, and Gaiety Theatre in 1878. In 1881 the Gaiety Theatre was completely gutted. The walls were built much higher and reroofed, and a new theatre, the Bijou, was constructed within the enlarged space.

The Bijou Theatre, said to have been the first theatre in America lighted by electricity, opened on December 11, 1882, with Gilbert and Sullivan's "Iolanthe." The auditorium and foyer were on the second floor, a then common arrangement, and were reached by two stairways that ascended through part of the Adams House from a small lobby on Washington Street. There was a horseshoe-shaped balcony with a pair of small kiosk-like proscenium boxes below it. The orchestra pit was within the reveal of the proscenium arch, which had a horseshoe-shaped elevation. The pseudo-Islamic décor included a "Kehdive" (Khedive) chandelier of Egyptian design.

By the 1885-1886 season, Keith and Albee had leased the Bijou, and by 1892 they owned the theatre and the stores and portion of the Adams House in front of it. After moving pictures became popular, the Bijou was altered into a movie house called the Bijou Dream. The most memorable feature of the Bijou Dream was the staircase of heavy glass under which flowed an illuminated waterfall. That stairway flanked an escalator with another stairway at its left. In its last days, the theatre was renamed the Intown. Four of its exits led into adjacent theatres, a hazardous arrangement. After the tragic Coconut Grove nightclub fire in Boston, the Intown, a fire marshal's nightmare, was ordered closed. Eventually it was razed to its orchestra floor, which became the roof of the stores below, enlarged by the removal of the stairs and escalator.

The next site within the block to have a theatre built upon it adjoins the north line of the Lion-Melodeon-Gaiety-Bijou-Intown site and is the site of the present B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre (Opera House). The first theatrical occupant of that site was the (third) Boston Theatre. The first Boston Theatre had been erected on an altogether different site at the corner of Federal and Franklin streets from plans by Charles Bulfinch. (By 1793, the orthodox Calvinists, who regarded the theatre as the "ante-room of Hell," could no longer muster enough votes to prevent the repeal of the old Puritan law that had until then kept theatres out of Boston.) The first Boston Theatre opened on February 3, 1794 and burned in 1798. The second Boston Theatre, also by Bulfinch, was built in that same year and, after alterations and additions, burned in 1852. It was then that a company was formed to provide a Boston Theatre on the Washington Street site.

The Boston Theatre Company was incorporated on May 15, 1852. It bought the Melodeon (former Lion) property, as well as land extending back to Mason Street owned by the Boston Gas Light Company. When the (third) Boston Theatre opened on September 11, 1854, it was the largest in the United States, having a capacity of 2,972. It was designed by Edward C. Cabot (1818-1901) and J. E. Cabot in association with Jonathan Preston (1801-1888) from a competition-winning design by H. Noury.

A long outer lobby led west from Washington Street to the foyer, which was at a right angle to the lobby and ran north along the rear of the auditorium. Basically, that was the same plan used in the succeeding theatre on the site, the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre, although the auditorium block of the latter is wider. A parlor extended north from the foyer of the Boston Theatre, forming an ell beyond the northern limit of the auditorium. The auditorium was approximately 84'

deep by 90' wide. Above the first-floor orchestra and parquet, there were three horseshoe-shaped balconies, and the 48'-wide and 41'-high proscenium was flanked at each side by a tier of four private boxes. The domed ceiling, 54' above the floor, was one of the first constructed on wire lath. An immense prism-hung gas chandelier was suspended from the center of the dome. The grand staircase to the first balcony, or dress circle, rose against the east wall of the foyer in sweeping curves from a mirrored landing. A self-supporting oak spiral staircase 9' wide led from the west end of the lobby to the second balcony, and third balcony, or gallery.

The stage had an extreme depth of 90' and was entered from Mason Street. Below the stage were storage and machinery rooms and a subcellar with a total depth of 32' below the stage floor, which contained 26 traps. Toward the rear of the understage space there was an assembly area from which as many as a dozen horses and scores of men could ascend an inclined "run" to the stage. Below the auditorium numerous columns were arranged in four concentric circles and connected by vaulting. The spaces between them were used to store scenery fabricated for use on the immense stage of the Boston Theatre and never discarded but saved for use in revivals of the plays for which they were created.

The original Boston Theatre Company incorporated in 1852 foundered in the financial storm of 1858, and a new corporation, which promptly relinquished ownership of the Melodeon Theatre, was formed. The name of the Boston Theatre was changed to Boston Academy of Music during the 1859-1860 season, but by 1862 the original name had been restored. On October 18, 1860, the theatre sheltered one of the greatest social events in Boston history, the ball given in honor of Queen Victoria's eldest son, H.R.H. Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, later H.M. King Edward VII. As the 18-year-old prince was travelling "incognito," the event was called the Renfrew Ball after the least of the royal guest's titles, Baron Renfrew. The parquet and orchestra were floored over to the level of the stage to form a great dance floor, and an opening was broken through the solid brick south wall to give access to the Melodeon Theatre, which served as a supper room. In contrast to that festive event, a tragic event tangentially affected the Boston Theatre in April 1865, when Edwin Booth, who was appearing there, received the news that his brother John Wilkes Booth had assassinated President Lincoln. Edwin Booth withdrew from the stage for nearly a year thereafter.

The Boston Theatre underwent only minor alterations during its 71 years of use. In 1888 the stage apron was cut back 10' because current stage usage by then kept the action behind the curtain line, box sets having been introduced. That eliminated the forestage overlooked by proscenium boxes and brought the added orchestra seats closer to the action on-stage. In 1890 electric light was installed. The great central gas chandelier was replaced by eight electric clusters and was stored in the attic. In 1892 Keith and Albee acquired the 38-year-old house and changed its name to B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre, the name under which it continued to operate for the 33 additional years until it closed in 1925. In 1895 the house was completely redecorated and provided with new seats. The original seats were described as "folding chairs," but that term merely meant that the seats folded up against the backs. The 1854 seating was set in fixed rows fastened to the floor. The seats were not folding chairs in the modern sense of the term. In 1908 the seating capacity was given as 3,140. The increase of 168 over the original 2,972 seats may be accounted for by the extra space made available by the cutting back of the stage apron in 1888. The unusual clock over the proscenium announced the time in two number panels and may have dated from the 1895 redecoration. By 1915 convenient access from Tremont Street to Mason Street for B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre users was provided by a passage through a building between those two streets. The building was four-and-a-half stories high, three bays wide, and adjoined the north party wall of another passage building, the entrance from Tremont Street to B. F. Keith's New Theatre. The ground floor had a central entrance arch supported by caryatids, and above the second-floor windows a two-tiered electric sign spelled NEW ENTRANCE BOSTON THEATRE. In early 1926, the theatre was razed.

On October 5, 1925, Albee opened a new theatre on the opposite (east) side of Washington Street designed by Arthur H. Bowditch. That building was first named B. F. Keith's New Boston Theatre and was later given the same name, B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre, as the 1854 house, with which it should not be confused, nor should the 1925 house be confused with yet another theatre with a similar name, B. F. Keith's New Theatre (1894), later simply named B. F. Keith's Theatre.

In March 1926, as the wreckers were demolishing B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre of 1854 to prepare its site for the erection of the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre, a curious discovery was made. Immured within the theatre, there was a slate-roofed two-and-a-half-story 18th-century frame house with one dormer

window, the lower fenestration of which suggested an old conversion from domestic to commercial use. It is not certain why the house was retained when the 1854 theatre was built. The house had once been used by the theatre staff as offices, but later construction completely concealed it, and it was then evidently forgotten. The house was not, as has been frequently stated, under the theatre stairs. It was adjacent to them.

The house apparently adjoined the part of the theatre containing the long lobby which extended from Washington Street to the auditorium entrance and the gallery staircase. It has been entered by means of the roof over that lobby. When the great staircase is torn down the old house will be more accessible and more readily seen. ("Wreckers Find Boston Theatre Encased House Whose Origin and History Remain Mysteries," New York Times, March 4, 1926, p. 23, col. 4.)

Shortly after Keith and Albee acquired the Boston Theatre in 1892, the partners decided to build a new theatre. For that purpose they purchased the property behind their Bijou Theatre extending west to Mason Street between the Boston Theatre of 1854 on the north and the rear portion of the Adams House on the south. That property was the third site in the block, chronologically, to have a theatre built upon it. The theatre, B. F. Keith's New Theatre, later simply renamed B. F. Keith's Theatre, was designed by the noted theatre architect John B. McElfatrick (18-?-1906) and opened on March 24, 1894. For reasons that will appear below, it was a true landmark in American theatre design. The long mirror-lined lobby leading west from Washington Street was between the entrance to the Bijou Theatre on the north and the Adams House on the south. The main foyer ran north-south behind the stores underneath the Bijou and, above, the Bijou stage on the east. The stage of the new theatre opened onto Mason Street.

A chief glory of B. F. Keith's New Theatre was the unprecedented care given to public accommodations. Within the entry arch of the stained-glass-ornamented Washington Street facade was a loggia with an inlaid mosaic floor and a Siena marble wainscot. There were large mirrors on each side of the room. The ceiling was elaborately decorated and lighted. At each side of the entrance was a circular Siena marble and plate glass box office with decorations in silver and a papier mâché ivory and gold dome. Heavy doors with stained glass panels and papier mâché ornament opened into a lobby foyer painted Nile green with an ornamental fireplace on the left and the doors to the main foyer at its end.

The main foyer was decorated in old rose, the walls interrupted at intervals by mirrors and panel paintings by Edward (Eduardo) Tojetti (1851-1930), an artist born in Rome who died in San Francisco. The wainscot and floor were marble. The foyer was richly furnished, and lighted by over 300 brass fixtures finished in burnished gold. In an alcove to the left at the end of the foyer, a marble stairway ascended to the first balcony. Leather-covered doors with silver hardware opened into the orchestra reception room. That room had deep carmine walls ornamented with papier mâché crossed bows and arrows and quivers. The floor was carpeted, and a carpeted stairway led to the balcony. Under the stairway was a suite of women's dressing rooms and lavatory. An elaborately carved oak fireplace in which a gas log was kept burning in winter stood in an alcove at the left of the reception room, under the first balcony stairway. The stairway leading down to the men's smoking rooms and lavatory was entered from that alcove. On the second floor, an additional set of reception rooms and parlors served the first balcony.

The lavish Baroque style of the spaces just described was continued in the auditorium, which was conventional in form. The auditorium was 77' wide by 80'8" deep and was 47'4" high from stage to ceiling. There were two balconies, and two tiers of boxes at each side of the proscenium. The seating capacity was nearly 3,000. A corner of the Adams House intruded to create a jog in the southeast corner of the auditorium. Wide iron fire escapes led from the south exits through an alley to Mason Street. The north wall adjoined the Boston Theatre. The stage was 60' wide and 42' deep.

The auditorium walls were done in green and rose, giving the effect of silk brocade. The woodwork was cherry, and the upholstery was green plush. The first balcony soffit was decorated in papier mâché relief and paintings by Tojetti, and the balcony fronts were done in white and gold. Over the proscenium, a three-panel painting by Tojetti represented music, comedy, and the dance. The ceiling was richly decorated in papier mâché and supported a papier mâché electric fixture containing 180 lights that nearly spanned the auditorium.

To B. F. Keith's partner and general manager, E. F. Albee, it was extremely important that the public know his theatre was immaculate, with no dirt lurking in obscure corners. (Albee's dedication to public service included so strong a preoccupation with hygienic cleanliness that it was said that he would have made an outstanding sanitary engineer.) Therefore,

in B. F. Keith's New Theatre even the basement and mechanical rooms were opened to the public with direct access from the main lobby. The resulting display was never again matched, even in later Albee theatres. The electric generator room was reached by a stepped passageway under the auditorium, its floor white marble and its wooden wainscot finished in ivory white. The passageway walls were painted rose shaded from a deep tone at the bottom to an almost cream shade at the top. The sky-blue ceiling had a papier mâché cornice. The reception room before the generator room was 20' square with a marble floor and a 4'-high wainscot above which the walls were shaded from light green to light pink. One side of the room held the main switchboard composed of three large marble slabs flanked by mirrors. There were three main switches, one for each generator, and 66 circuit switches as well as three ampere meters and a voltmeter. All were of copper and phosphor bronze, nickel plated and polished. At the top of the board, 66 indicator or pilot lights were set into the marble in a double scroll pattern.

The generator room was decorated in the same way as the reception room. A nickel-plated railing supporting hammered brass light standards surrounded the generators. The steel parts of the three large generators were nickel-plated, and the cast-iron parts were painted brownish-white. The engineers wore suits of spotless white, and their oil cans stood on an onyx-topped gilt table. Although this 1894 extravagance was not repeated, it presaged the lavish public spaces and elaborate staff accommodations of later Albee theatres, culminating in the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre of 1928.

In the spring of 1928, B. F. Keith's New Theatre, then no longer "new," finished its last season as a Keith-Albee house. Its replacement, the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre, was nearing completion on the adjacent former site of B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre and was scheduled to open in the fall. On June 30, 1928, the Shuberts bought the 1894 structure and reopened it on April 1, 1929, as the Apollo Theatre, a name later changed to the Shubert Lyric Theatre. The house was called the Normandie for a while during its downhill career as a film theatre and was rechristened the Laffmovie in 1949. It was dark for several years but survived in a shabby state until the 1950s, when it was demolished and replaced by a parking lot. The long Washington Street lobby became a bar and cocktail lounge.

After the Adams House was razed in the late 1920s, still another theatre, the Paramount, was built in the block bounded by West, Washington, Avery, and Mason streets. However, as that Art Deco house by architect Arthur H. Bowditch on the Adams House site was neither connected with, nor adjacent to, the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre, it remains outside the scope of this report.

Washington and Tremont streets, two of the most frequented thoroughfares in the Boston downtown shopping and theatre district, are separated by Mason Street, a one-block-long service street that parallels them between West and Avery streets. Tremont Street borders Boston Common, and in 1897 Keith and Albee built an entrance-building annex at 163 Tremont Street so that B. F. Keith's New Theatre could be advertised on, and approached directly from, Boston Common. The new, narrow annex penetrated the block between Tremont and Mason streets and led by a tunnel beneath Mason Street into the B. F. Keith's New Theatre auditorium behind the boxes at the north side (stage left) of the proscenium. There was also an exit from the annex onto Mason Street, across which one could walk to a side entrance to B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre.

The Tremont Street elevation of the annex is one bay wide and the equivalent of five stories high. The original design, now partially altered and completely concealed by an enameled metal facade, was an elaborate fantasy making much use of stained glass, which was illuminated at night to produce a jewelled effect. The elliptical entrance arch was flanked by engaged Renaissance Ionic columns and sheltered by a rectangular glass and metal marquee with an elliptical half-dome. Electric-bulb-studded high-relief letters crossing the spandrels of the arch spelled B. F. KEITH'S THEATRE. Each of the engaged columns supported an entablature block above which was a large semi-octagonal dome-roofed kiosk-like stained-glass "lantern." There were very narrow elongated stained-glass windows above the lantern-like elements. Over the entrance, there was a large three-sided oriel window above which was a tall arch-headed stained-glass window crowned by bas-relief Rococo mantling. Both the oriel and the window over it were enclosed by a shallow arch. The oriel soffit was "supported" by four gynastic putti, one posed on the shoulders of another and holding the outstretched arms of the other two. There were ornamented panels below the three pivoted stained-glass casements of the oriel, and striped awnings shaded the casements, at least during the summer of 1905. At that time there were also

four brackets suspending carbon arc lights flanking the oriel. The flat oriel roof had a bracketed cornice and a low parapet with a slender finial on each of its four posts. Above the curvilinear roofline, there was a large square cupola with arch-headed stained-glass windows facing west toward the Common, north, and south. The cupola roof was domical, and the herm-supported projecting arches capping the cupola windows each carried freestanding letters spelling B. F. KEITH'S. The base of the cupola was flanked by a pair of "lanterns" like those already described.

At an undetermined date, a new rectangular marquee with three-tiered attraction boards and bulb-bordered parapets spelling RKO KEITH'S replaced an earlier marquee, and a four-story-high bulb-bordered vertical sign was cantilevered from the facade. Below the RKO symbol, the vertical shaft spelled B. F. KEITH'S, and at the base, a cross bar spelled MEMORIAL THEATRE in much smaller letters. By 1938 the "lanterns" had disappeared, and the oriel had been shorn of its ornaments and stained glass. None of the original facade has been visible since 1946.

The passageway within the annex was originally lavishly decorated. The grand staircase leading to the tunnel under Mason Street (which could also be reached by an elevator) was marble, its marble parapets ending in newels supporting elaborate vasiform electroliers. The ceiling over the staircase had a deep Rococo cove painted green and a large rectangular center painted by Tojetti. Statues and potted palms abounded around the stairwell. Those splendors were swept away when the grand stairway was removed and the interior, as well as the Tremont Street facade, was altered beyond recognition. The rear (Mason Street) elevation, however, remains intact, and the basement and tunnel are still accessible from the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre (Opera House). The basement contains the former green room of B. F. Keith's New Theatre with fragments of its elaborate ceiling, Baroque fireplace, mantel mirror, and marbleized walls, as well as the elevator. The tunnel, with its inlaid marble floor, Tojetti mural of three putti dancing in a rose-strewn niche, and Rococo plasterwork, has steam pipes running through it and, like the rest of the basement, is unused. Since 1897, when it was built, the annex at 163 Tremont Street has been in the same successive ownerships as B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre and the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre (Opera House), the structure that now occupies the former Boston Theatre site. Although greatly altered in appearance, the annex continues to serve as a passage from Tremont Street to Mason Street, across which patrons may conveniently enter the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre, now the Opera House.

The B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre was erected under the close personal supervision of Edward Franklin Albee as Albee's tribute to the memory of his late partner and friend. For that reason, it was built with a degree of luxury in its appointments that is almost unrivalled. The building permit was issued on December 3, 1925, but demolition of B. F. Keith's Boston Theatre to clear the site delayed construction for nearly a year. Construction was well advanced when the cornerstone was laid on August 25, 1927, and the inaugural program took place on October 29 of the following year. The opening was attended by many theatrical luminaries, among them George M. Cohan, Lew Fields, Joe Weber, Fred Stone, Maggie Cline, Al Jolson, Julia Arthur Cheney, May Irwin, Raymond Hitchcock, James McIntyre, Tom Heath, Will Cressey, and Eddie Leonard. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts was represented by His Excellency Governor Alvan T. Fuller, and His Honor Mayor Malcom E. Nichols represented the City of Boston. Former Mayor James Michael Curley was also a guest of honor. The Radio-Keith-Orpheum organization was represented by the host of that great occasion, E. F. Albee, and by RKO Board Chairman, Joseph P. Kennedy.

Following the speeches from the dignitaries came a program of stage entertainment presenting Jack Pearl, a German dialect comedian and his company in a skit, "The Interpreter"; a juggler, Rastelli; the Foy Family, six in number and all with the talents of their father, Eddie Foy; Frankie Heath, doing song stories; Frank Mitchell and Jack Durant in a slapstick skit; and Day and Eileen and Maris with twelve girls in an ensemble dance. On the screen Colleen Moore starred in the feature film, Oh Kay! The program lasted until after midnight, and before departing, members of the theatre audience were treated to an opportunity to see themselves in a hurriedly processed movie film strip of the opening-night throng waiting outside the theatre. The music was provided for the occasion by guest organist Henry Rogers.

The theatre continued its policy of vaudeville and feature film presentation for a very few months. By the spring of 1929 it had dropped the films and was presenting two-a-day vaudeville only. In September of that year the vaudeville was discontinued, and a return to pictures, alone, was made. The theatre then continued to remain a first-run picture house, but with the advent of the Depression the stage was used with less and less frequency. In February 1935, however, there was offered a gala, month-long, stage event to celebrate the 52nd Anniversary of B. F. Keith's entrance into the exhibition business. Personalities famous throughout the great days of vaudeville appeared onstage, and the feature film, "The Good Fairy," starred Margaret Sullavan.

In 1965 the B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre was purchased from RKO by Sack Theatres, a subsidiary of Cadence Industries of West Caldwell, N. J. The new owners refurbished the building, making great efforts to restore its opulent beauty, and re-named it the Savoy Theatre. The house reopened as the Savoy with the feature film "Darling." By 1973 the proscenium arch was bricked up, and a second auditorium was installed within the stage. The theatre was then named the Savoy 1 & 2. The twinned theatre continued to operate as a pair of film houses until 1978, when it was bought by the Opera Company of Boston.

The Opera Company of Boston and Sarah Caldwell finally have a permanent home after 20 years without. The company announced Thursday /October 19th/ it has purchased the old Savoy Theatre, originally/ built for vaudeville some 50 years ago.

"This is not the solution to all of our problems, but it is an important first step towards the establishment of a full opera complex in Boston," Caldwell said.

The company bought the Savoy from Sack Theatres Inc., for \$885,000. After a cleanup, it will go into use Nov. 1 for a production of Puccini's "Tosca." Renovations are scheduled before the 1979 season opens in February. (Washington Post, October 21, 1978, p. F3)

On August 15, 1979, the mortgage was burned and the Opera Company of Boston acquired full ownership. The name of the theatre was then changed from Savoy to the name it now bears, simply, the Opera House.

Last Wednesday, Sarah Caldwell stood on the stage of the Savoy Theatre, the new home of the Opera Company of Boston, and, in a hibachi that was part of a stage setting for "Madam Butterfly," burned a copy of the mortgage on the theater.

The \$600,000 loan was taken less than a year ago when the company bought the elegant 50-year-old theater for a total of \$885,000. Thanks to a determined, hardworking board of directors, Caldwell's company, in its 21st year, owns its own home.

The mortgage payment is only one indication of the kind of loyalty and energy Caldwell has aroused among her Boston supporters. For two decades, the 51-year-old conductor has given Boston some of the best opera to be seen and heard in this country. (Washington Post, August 23, 1979, pp. D1 & D6)

C. Sources of Information:

1. Original architectural drawings: No original drawings have been reported, but 13 blueprints of original Lamb office drawings were presented to HABS by the management of Sack Theatres, Inc. in 1976. They include sections and details but not floor plans. Nine have been photocopied for this report.
2. Old views: The following old views have been photocopied for this report and are from sources listed more fully in the Index to Photographs.

Annex Entrance on Tremont Street (1905, Myers Collection)

Tremont Street Annex, Looking Southeast (1938, Theatre Historical Society)

Washington Street Facade (1955, Theatre Historical Society)

Outer Lobby, Looking West; Grand Foyer, Looking South; Grand Foyer, Looking North; Grand Lounge in Basement; Bust of B. F. Keith in Rostrum at Head of Grand Stairs; Grand Foyer Mezzanine, Looking South; Women's Mezzanine Lounge; Men's Mezzanine Smoking Room (1928, Helgesen Collection)

The following publications reproduced old views. See bibliography for full citations.

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre by Thomas W. Lamb exemplifies the highest development of the American moving picture palace. Embedded within a commercial block, the theatre presents only a tall, narrow Baroque terra cotta elevation to view from Washington Street, giving no indication of the great bulk behind it. The lavishly ornamented interiors are exceptional both for the extravagant splendor of their materials, attesting to the memorial character of the theatre, and for their luxurious and spacious public facilities. The traditional Baroque designs of the grand foyer, or "memorial hall," and the splendid auditorium seating nearly 3,000 are particularly harmonious, equaling the visual impact of some of the finest European opera houses. The backstage accommodations, now altered, were unusually commodious and comfortable. A separate annex built in 1897 but now "modernized" provides access from Tremont Street to Mason Street, across which there is a rear entrance to an arcade within the theatre. An unused 1897 tunnel under Mason Street that connected the annex with an earlier theatre is accessible from the basement of the present theatre and adds archeological interest to the complex.
2. Condition of fabric: The condition is fundamentally good. The alterations have not affected the basic structure, and the surfaces have been generally well-maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: An entrance wing approximately 22' wide runs west from Washington Street about 96' to join the south side of the main block. Behind a facade with a tall parapet, the whole rising to the equivalent of five stories in height, the two-story entrance wing is about 42' high. The main block, which contains the grand foyer, auditorium, and stage, is about 156' wide by 186' long. The roof is around 103' above grade behind a 3'-high parapet. An "arcade" containing a passage and stores continues the line of the entrance wing west along the south flank of the main block to Mason Street, increasing the total width to about 175'. The L-shaped building is irregular, measuring over-all approximately as follows: north side, entrance wing 96' plus main block 175'; east side, entrance wing (on Washington Street) 22' plus main block 130'; south side, 300'; west side (along Mason Street) 175'.

The Tremont Street annex, entirely separate from the theatre building itself, is a five-story rectangular structure in the midst of a commercial block. It is approximately 20' wide and extends east about 75', the full depth of the block. The ground floor contains a box office and a passage to Mason Street.

2. Foundations: The foundations of the theatre are reinforced concrete. Some of the footings of individual columns were reported in 1928 to be the largest ever used in Boston. The foundations of the Tremont Street annex are brick.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The tall, narrow Washington Street elevation is faced entirely with white terra cotta. A wide, two-story-high archway leads from the sidewalk to an open vestibule. The opening is flanked by piers containing large bronze display frames. At the spring line of the arch, the archway is divided horizontally by a flat rectangular marquee, a replacement of the original marquee, which had bulb-bordered faces with shaped pediments framing "RKO KEITH'S" in ornamental letters above three-tiered attraction boards. Above the plain present marquee, the arch is glazed and ornamented by a bronze screen of widely-spaced attenuated balusters framed within an elaborate perimeter. The archway is flanked by rusticated piers and spandrels. The spring line of the arch is marked by a pair of elaborate cartouches, and a larger cartouche, lavishly garlanded, ornaments the keystone.

The haunches of the arch support rusticated piers flanking the upper portion of the wall. Each pier terminates in a large fruit-ornamented cartouche, above which is a diminutive entablature segment composed of a frieze with a small cartouche, and a denticulated cornice supporting half of a small broken scrolled pediment. Between the pediment halves, a narrow frieze spans the facade. It is divided into thirds by small masks, and the central third breaks forward to form a semi-elliptical corbel-supported shelf. The cartouche-ornamented corbel is flanked by scrollwork and surmounted by a head in a stylized sunburst.

Above the frieze is a three-bay free-standing arcaded parapet. The outer arches are flanked by Corinthian pilasters which support an entablature with a pulvinated frieze decorated with cartouches, and an under-scaled cornice. The central arch is flanked by engaged Corinthian columns. Above the central bay, the entablature sweeps upward and outward to form a Baroque canopy surmounted by sculpted choristers and a most elaborate scrolled cartouche.

with a high sunburst top. The scrollwork continues across the outer openings as cresting. Additional ornament formed of scrolls and enriched corbels elaborates the outer arches. Each arch contains a richly ornamented urn, the outer ones identical, and the central one larger and more lavishly treated.

The area of the facade between the rusticated piers above the entrance archway and below the parapet is divided into three vertical panels by narrow moldings. The moldings end in scrolls above the outer panels and blend into the ornament surrounding the corbelled cartouche above the central panel. A rectangular nine-over-nine-light window is at the approximate center of each panel. Below the outer windows, the panel moldings form delicate scrollwork, and above each outer window there is a moderately ornate cartouche. There is a pendant cartouche below the central window, and above it a scroll-framed mask is surmounted by a gabled hood and a circular ornamental relief plaque that rises almost to the corbelled cartouche.

A tall vertical bulb-bordered arrow-tipped sign with a circular head was formerly cantilevered at a right angle from the facade between the top of the entrance archway and the top of the central parapet arch. The head spelled RKO, and the shaft spelled KEITH'S. That sign was later replaced by a lower and simpler square sign, its attraction board crowned by SAVOY in ornamental letters, and its outer edge flanked by the numbers 1 and 2.

The buff-colored brick side and rear walls have no architectural pretensions. They are unornamented except for some simple string courses on the Mason Street (rear) elevation. The rear entrance to the theatre has a small rectangular original marquee.

The front elevation of the Tremont Street annex has been completely altered and bears no trace of its original appearance. It is now faced with enameled metal. The rear (Mason Street) elevation is three bays wide and five stories high. It is constructed of buff-colored Roman brick laid up in running bond and painted white at the ground floor, which contains three arched openings. The central arch, larger than the other two, is the entrance to the interior corridor, or passage. The south arch is boarded up, the space behind it being occupied by an elevator shaft. The upper part of the identical north arch has been boarded up, and the remaining rectangular opening contains a service door. The brick piers supporting the

arches have thin stone capitals and rest on simple stone bases. The extradoses of the arch voussoirs are framed by a stone molding, and each arch has an ornamental key-stone. Two stone cartouches stud the wall above the central spandrels, and above the outer piers, the brick is partially rusticated. The first-story stone trim is painted dark green, and the story is capped by a heavy crown molding.

Each of the four upper stories has three rectangular one-over-one-light windows with double-hung sash. The splayed voussoirs of their brick lintels have very slightly arched soffits of segmental contour. The windows are unornamented except for the fourth-story central window, which is wider than the others, square, and has a thin stone keystone, and the fifth-story windows, which have stone outer voussoirs as well as stone keystones. A stone belt course spans the facade at the level of the fifth-story window sills. Crowning the wall is a high parapet in the form of a stepped gable with a large semicircular-arched opening at its center. Behind the parapet at the south side of the building there is a very tall elevator penthouse.

4. Structural system, framing: The structural system is a combination of reinforced concrete and brick masonry bearing walls, reinforced concrete slab floors, and steel trusses.

The superstructure is supported on steel frames of massive proportions. The single balcony is supported on heavy steel trusses and cantilever girders. There are no exposed columns in the auditorium. The roof is carried on heavy steel trusses spanning the clear width of the auditorium, some 130 feet. Some of these trusses are the heaviest ever used in building construction. . . . Some of these trusses weighed in excess of 160 tons apiece, while the heaviest joints weighed 40 tons each. (Motion Picture Herald, November 24, 1928, p. 41)

5. Openings: Except for those already described, doorways, doors, and windows were not recorded. The original doors at the Washington Street entrance were bronze with heavy plate glass single panels.
6. Roof: All the roofs of the theatre, and the annex roof, are flat. The roofing material is built-up composition. The theatre roofs are concealed behind 3'-high brick parapets.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Six-step stairways lead from the north-east and northwest quadrants of the grand lobby to an elliptical hall below the memorial rostrum at the head of the grand staircase. From that elliptical hall at an intermediate level between the main floor and the basement, open stairs descend southward (through an archway between the southeast and southwest quadrants of the room) to the grand lounge. A small room, originally a first-aid dispensary, or "Red Cross" room, opens from the west end of the elliptical hall. The staff area of the basement is reached by separate enclosed stairs entered from a doorway in the northwest quadrant of the elliptical hall, a route provided so that staff need not pass through the public lounge to reach their quarters. The basement is clearly divided into public and staff areas.

In addition to the grand lounge, the public area of the basement includes women's and men's retiring suites. The women's suite opens south from the grand lounge and contains a lounge-smoking room, a vestibule, and telephone room west of the lounge, a cosmetic room entered from the south side of the vestibule, and a lavatory entered from the cosmetic room. The men's suite lies north of the grand lounge and is composed of a vestibule and telephone room entered from a doorway at the west side of the stairs, a smoking room-lounge north of the vestibule, and a lavatory west of the smoking room.

The remainder of the basement is devoted to service areas. The service rooms are connected by a narrow corridor which follows the perimeter of the auditorium along the east and south walls, connecting at the northeast and southeast corners with the men's lavatory and the women's cosmetic room, respectively. The staff stairway from the elliptical hall above descends to the extreme northern end of the corridor. Along the east corridor, the rooms are designated as follows: Men, Janitor, Sign Room, Painter, Chief of Service, Doormen & Ushers, Supply Room, Porters, Women Employees, Women Cleaners, and Superintendent. At the far southeast corner, under the Washington Street lobby, there is a large high-ceilinged rough concrete pump room. A plenum chamber occupies space under the auditorium.

Mechanical and engineering services occupy the south corridor. There the rooms are labelled as follows: Fan Room, Telephone Relay Room, Battery & Emergency Lighting Room, Machine Shop, [second] Fan Room, Engineer's Room (a suite with a shower and lavatory), and Vacuum Cleaner Room. The engineer's room connects with the large high-ceilinged rough concrete boiler room under the rear (west) end of the first-floor arcade. There is also a stairway ascending to the rear exit court of the theatre. (The two large boilers in the boiler room have never been fired, as a stack permit was denied when the theatre was built, although the boilers had already been installed. The building has always been heated by city steam.)

Near the west end of the building, the corridor branches north to enter the area below the stage, where the facilities are devoted to the performing arts. Near the engineer's suite is the musical director's suite, also with shower and lavatory. At the west end of the corridor is the entry to the dressing-room section of the building. As the corridor enters the area below the stage, there is a stage manager's room to the west and an electrical contactor room to the east. The large room under the stage connects with the orchestra pit to the east and with the stage itself by means of a spiral stairway to the west. A musicians' locker room occupies the northwest corner, and there is a stage hands' room in the southwest corner. An animal room and large elevator are north of the large room under the stage.

A trip below the stage reveals another unusual section of this theatre. . . . It is reached through heavy iron grated doors. It is the animal room, provided for the beasts in the animal acts. The room is well lighted and well ventilated, and at one side of the room is a huge bathtub, built into the floor, like those one finds in modern bathrooms, except that it is many times as large. This is the bath for the animals and is sufficiently large for the largest polar bear. A private elevator operates from this room to the rear of the stage. (Motion Picture Herald, November 24, 1928, pp. 40-41)

The corridor in the dressing-room section connects with the rooms above by both a stairway and an elevator. It also, through the removal of certain partition walls, connects with the tunnel underneath Mason Street that links the theatre to the Tremont Street annex.

- b. Main floor: The great arch in the entrance facade opens into an exterior vestibule, the main portion of which is about 20' square and 36' high. A wedge-shaped section about 10' wide on the north side and 2' on the south fills the east segment of the vestibule, a space created by the fact that Washington Street and the building lot are not precisely parallel. The vestibule, in turn, opens into the lobby, an elaborate passage about 20' wide by 96' long and 36' high that runs west to join the main building. A glazed bronze screen containing three sets of paired doors divides the foyer from the vestibule. At the west end of the lobby, five steps ascend to similar doors below a mirrored bronze screen. Beyond the doors, an approximately 11'-high passage, or arcade, about 138' long narrows to a width of about 12' as it veers toward the south and leads west to Mason Street past shops along its north (inner) side. There were originally five stores in the arcade.

The east side of the main block contains the grand foyer, a 37'-high room 32½' wide by 64' long that gives access to the orchestra level of the auditorium along its west flank. The grand foyer is north of the east end of the arcade and is divided from it by three sets of paired doors. Just within the auditorium, a passage about 11' wide runs behind the orchestra seats. The maximum width of the auditorium is about 116', and the orchestra level is about 96' deep from the curtain line to the back of the rearmost row of seats. The orchestra seating is composed of 30 rows separated by four aisles, and there is a railed-off loge of 11 rows not more than four seats long at each side of the auditorium. A proscenium opening around 54' wide by 52' high opens from the auditorium to the stage, which is about 40' deep and occupies the west end of the main block. The gridiron is around 64' above the stage floor. The trapezoidal shape of the site allows ample space for a dressing-room section at the southwest corner of the building.

The dressing-room section is entered from the southwest corner of the stage or from a stage door on Mason Street. Within the door, a short flight of curving steps led to the elliptical vestibule, which had plaster walls articulated by pilasters and panel moldings in the Louis XVI style. The vestibule was 9' across at its widest point and 17' long. The ceiling was slightly coved, and a small bronze and crystal chandelier hung below a large elliptical patera. At one end of the room was the stage door-man's booth, a curved construction of marble, bronze, and glass, resembling a ticket office. At the opposite end was the opening into the stair hall, which led to a small corridor containing two elevators to the dressing rooms above. The corridor led south to the green room, which, like the vestibule, was elliptical. It was 21' long with a maximum width of 13'. Both vestibule and green room were 13'8" high. The green room walls were elaborately plastered in the Louis XV style, and there was a fireplace with a French Rococo mantelpiece. The dressing-room section, altered for use as apartments and now (1980) being returned to its original function, was described in 1928 as follows:

Stepping off the spacious stage at the rear left, one enters the chorus room, where provision is made for quick changes for the girls. Opening from this room is a large, well lighted, beautifully tiled shower room. Passing from the chorus room one reaches a delightful lobby or reception room the green room, beautifully furnished in pale blue and decorated in gold and ivory. Here a corridor runs parallel with, but away from the stage, and from this corridor open the private rooms for the artists. Every one of these rooms is beautifully furnished. Every one has a private bath and shower adjoining.

There are similar rooms for the men. But that is not all. There is a nursery for the children of the artists, fitted with every conceivable kind of toy for the little tots. There is a library. There is a billiard room for the men. There is a barber shop and a beauty parlor. There is a gymnasium and handball court. There is a complete electric laundry and an electric kitchen which would be the envy of every apartment dweller. There are private elevators. And all these are for the performers. (Motion Picture Herald, November 24, 1928, p. 40)

The billiard room, nursery, laundry room, etc. were on the top story of the multi-level dressing-room complex. The chorus quick-change room, labelled "Boston," is at the south end of the stage, and a scenery storage room, star's quick-change room, and the upper opening of the animal elevator are at the north end of the stage.

- c. Mezzanine: The mezzanine is reached by the grand staircase at the north end of the grand foyer. The staircase ascends to an oval space that is entirely open on the south and opens west through a lower archway to the mezzanine promenade. The promenade is about 20' wide and runs north-south along the west side of the grand foyer, which it overlooks through three openings. The promenade, like the grand foyer itself, is under the balcony. The theatre is unusual in that no vomitoria join the balcony to the mezzanine promenade. Instead, a relatively narrow corridor opens from each end of the promenade and runs west between the auditorium wall and the outside wall of the building to the end of the lower balcony cross-aisle. The north end of the mezzanine promenade is headed by an open stairway that turns to run east, enclosed between the auditorium wall and the outside wall of the building, to the north end of the upper cross-aisle of the balcony. At the south end of the mezzanine promenade, a similarly enclosed stairway runs east to the south end of the upper cross-aisle.

The mezzanine lounge suites open from the south end of the promenade. The men's suite occupies the area directly south of the grand foyer, above the east end of the arcade, and consists of a large elliptical smoking room to the south of which is the lavatory. The women's suite extends along the south side of the main block above the arcade and is composed of a vestibule, lounge, cosmetic room, and lavatory.

- d. Balcony level: The depth of the auditorium from the curtain line to the rear of the balcony is approximately 128', and the maximum height is around 83'. The lowest, or mezzanine, section of the balcony has three rows of seats, and below the level of the balcony parapet, there is a large separate eight-seat box at each side of the proscenium. The boxes are reached both from stairs ascending from the orchestra level behind the proscenium wall and from stairs descending from the west ends of the side corridors

described above. Above the lower cross-aisle of the balcony, the middle section contains 15 rows of seats, and above the upper cross-aisle there are six additional rows. All three sections of balcony seating are divided vertically into subsections by four stepped aisles. The front and middle sections of the balcony are flanked at each side by a colonnade that continues in a slight curve around the rear of the house, embracing the rearmost six rows of seats. Above their plinths, the columns are about 18' high, and behind all of them there runs a tall, narrow passage. Above the colonnade entablature, a series of lunettes runs completely around the auditorium, fronting a very narrow service passage. The projection room is at the rear of the service passage, above the balcony passage.

e. Upper floors: A single office floor runs above the vestibule and lobby, at approximately the fourth-story level. It is reached from a private elevator ascending from the north side of the foyer. The upper floors of the dressing-room section have been noted above.

2. Stairways: The 23-step white marble grand stairway projects about 12' into the north end of the grand foyer, from which it ascends 15 risers to a landing within a wide, tall archway. The sides of the lower run are concave, narrowing slightly as they pass through the archway, but flaring at the curtail step to a width of over 18' and widening gracefully again as they reach the landing. At the landing, the stairway divides, ascending east and west in eight curving risers around the base of a projecting elliptical white marble rostrum. The parapets of both stairs and rostrum are composed of square marble blocks between which are bronze filigree panels, the whole capped by broad white marble railings. The steps are thickly carpeted.

The stairs that descend from the elliptical hall under the grand stairway to the grand lounge in the basement have white marble parapets similar to those of the grand stairway and rostrum. The stairs themselves, however, are of cream-colored terrazzo, not marble. They project southward about 15 steps into the grand lounge and are splayed to a width of about 16' at the curtail step.

The lower runs of the carpeted marble stairway at the north end of the mezzanine promenade are open. The first run ascends north seven risers to a curved landing, and thence the second run rises eastward. The stairs curve gracefully, flaring slightly at the lower run. The closed marble strings are capped by bronze filigreed railings of Louis XIV design, and the walls of the stairwell are paneled in "Albee red" brocade above a paneled dado.

The carpeted marble stairs at the south end of the mezzanine promenade rise steeply toward the south in a single run until they are out of sight from the mezzanine level. They then run east. They are enclosed and are therefore far less ornamental than those at the opposite end of the promenade. They project only four risers into the open with a slight flare and are furnished with plain, simple handrails.

The enclosed runs of public stairs are interrupted at intervals by landings and rise between walls paneled in "Albee red" brocade above paneled dados. Grilled radiator enclosures and glazed fire hose cases are inserted occasionally into the paneling.

3. Architectural and decorative treatment: (The flooring, wall and ceiling finish, lighting, etc., are integral elements of the architectural and decorative treatment of the various interiors and will therefore be described together, not as separate entities.)
 - a. Vestibule: The arched east end of the vestibule is open below the level of the marquee and above that level is filled with a glazed bronze screen. The arched west end is filled with a corresponding screen above three sets of paired entrance doors. The north and south wall are also arched and have bronze display panels similar in design to the entrance doors. Above the panels, each wall is finished in plaster ornamented with a large bas-relief cartouche. The ceiling is composed of a dome on boss-ornamented pendentives. The annular base of the dome is formed of a small cornice supporting a broad band of relief ornament interrupted at each of the four axes by a large cartouche. A chandelier, its lights enclosed in globes, is suspended from the large, delicately modeled rosette in the center of the dome.

The vestibule and lobby are visually unified by the transparency of the bronze and glass screen between them. The domical design of the vestibule is twice repeated within the lobby, and the effect of unity is further enhanced by the continuation of the simple geometric pattern of the terrazzo floor. If the vestibule and lobby were considered as one space, the combined bays would be perceived as having an A-B-A-B-A rhythm, the "A" bays being domed and the two "B" bays having transverse barrel vaults. The first "A" bay, the vestibule, has already been described.

- b. Lobby: The first (east) bay within the lobby, a "B" bay, has north and south walls articulated by richly-black-veined white marble Corinthian piers supporting a cream and gold entablature with an enriched pulvinated frieze and modillioned cornice. The piers are unfluted, rest on black marble plinths, and have gold-leafed capitals. Between the piers, the white marble field of each wall contains a door-sized mirrored panel within a dark green marble eared architrave, above which is a richly ornamented pedimental hood supporting an elaborate cartouche. (In one of the two "B" bays, one of the mirrored panels conceals the door to the manager's office.) The cream and gold barrel vault springs from the cornices and is composed of a wide central span flanked by narrower arches. The central span is ornamented by three richly-framed elliptical bosses, and the soffits of the flanking arches each contain seven enriched panels.

At the east end of this "B" bay, each entablature breaks forward slightly and is supported by a veined white marble paneled pier. At the west end of this same bay, the cornices are slightly recessed and supported by unfluted engaged Corinthian columns. The black-veined white marble columns match the piers articulating the "B" bays and, like them, are monoliths. The narrow vertical wall segments between those piers and the east paneled piers and west engaged columns are sheathed in white marble. The second (western) "B" bay is identical in design to the first (east) one, except that it is flanked on the east at each side by an engaged column and on the west by a veined white marble paneled pier, a reversal of the arrangement just described. As a consequence of that reversal, the north and south walls of the central

"A" bay (the eastern one of the two "A" bays in the lobby) are flanked at each side by engaged Corinthian columns.

The central "A" bay (considering the vestibule and lobby as a unit) originally had a bronze-framed ticket booth, since removed to a sidewalk position, in its north wall. Both north and south walls now contain elaborate bronze-framed tripartite display panels, above which the walls are fully sheathed by mirrors within arched marble surrounds. The high round arches that spring across the "A"-bay walls from the ends of the "B"-bay entablatures have single-paneled soffits and enriched fascias. The north and south walls of the westernmost "A" bay are covered by textile fabric within flat marble frames. A bronze-framed mirror on the south wall is matched on the north wall by an identically designed mirrored door to the office elevator. The ceilings of the central and western "A" bays (domes on pendentives) are identical with the vestibule ceiling. A crystal chandelier, larger and more elaborate than the vestibule chandelier, hangs within each of the other two "A" bays.

At the west end of the lobby, five serpentine steps raise the level to a shallow landing in front of the doors. The west wall is spanned by three sets of paired bronze and glass doors below mirrored transom panels. Above, a bronze lintel ornamented with swags supports an elaborate mirror-filled bronze grille that fills the arched wall. The arched portion of the grille is composed of a curvilinear filigree pattern.

The decorations of the upper areas of the lobby are accented by gold leaf and are finished in shades of cream, with some portions blended to give an "antique" effect. The Baroque richness of the ornamentation, as well as the high quality of the marble and metalwork, set the tone for the other major interiors of the theatre.

- c. Arcade: (The term "arcade" here signifies a covered walk with shops: it has nothing to do with arcuated construction.) Beyond the doors at the west end of the lobby, the architectural grandeur temporarily vanishes. The arcade is a relatively low and simple space. The floor is terrazzo, the flat ceiling is

plastered, and the plastered walls have panels containing flocked wallpaper. Small crystal fixtures light the area. At the east end, the north wall of the arcade contains three sets of paired bronze and glass doors opening into the grand foyer. Opposite those doors, the south wall is bowed. Originally there was a fountain at that point, later blocked by a series of display panels. At the point where the arcade veers toward the south, there are two bow-fronted bronze and glass ticket booths. West of that point, the arcade narrows and continues west, following the south wall of the main block to Mason Street. There are three (originally five) bronze-framed store fronts along the north side of the arcade passage. Although some ornamental moldings frame the wall and ceiling panels, the arcade remains quite simple in appearance.

- d. Grand foyer: The grand foyer is three bays long and one bay wide, the transition from the east and west sides to the north and south ends being negotiated by curved segments of wall, or quadrants. The bays are articulated by 16 monolithic gray-veined white marble unfluted engaged Corinthian columns 21' high and weighing over 16 tons apiece. The columns stand on low black marble podia and have black marble bases and gold-leafed capitals. Single columns flank the quadrants, and the columns at each side of the room are paired. The columns support entablature segments, each with a swag-and-console-ornamented pulvinated frieze and modillioned cornice. The ceiling is deeply coved, the cove being divided into eight sections by the arches of the bays. The cove sections above the quadrants are wider than the others, and each of the eight sections contains a large cartouche framed by very elaborate scrollwork above delicately molded ornament. The splayed soffits of the arches that divide the cove into sections are also delicately ornamented in low relief.

The richly molded inner edge of the cove surrounds the central field of the lavishly ornamented ceiling, which has semicircular ends. The ceiling field is pierced by three lacunars, or shallow domes, painted light blue and originally indirectly lighted. A large and elaborate crystal chandelier hangs from the center of each of the three domes. All of the molded ornament above the columns is gold-leafed against a cream ground. Off-white molded faces provide occasional accents, a device used also in the auditorium.

Each of the arched south, east, and west bays is divided horizontally by a white marble balconette of serpentine plan at the mezzanine level. The north bay contains the grand stairway, behind which there is an elliptical rostrum at the mezzanine level. The balconettes are supported on short white marble scrolled consoles and are fronted by serpentine bronze railings of delicate curvilinear filigree designs. The shallow balconette above the opening from the arcade into the grand foyer is wider than the others, its serpentine railing flanked by shorter straight sections of railing supported by square white marble paneled podia. The blind south wall behind the balconette is covered by a multi-paned mirror. The three east bays are also blind, their balconettes backed by simulated French doors glazed with mirrors and set within serpentine-arched marble architraves. The architraves, in turn, are set into the cloth-covered walls. Below those east balconettes, the walls are covered with "Albee red" brocade.

Behind the balconettes of the west wall, there are three rectangular openings into the mezzanine promenade. The arch-framed wall areas above the openings are covered with brocade. On the main floor level, the north and south bays of the west wall contain bronze-framed glazed doors opening into the auditorium. The doorways have white marble architraves with finely-carved overdoors combining foliate, floral, and scrolled motifs surrounding a carved head. The bay between the doorways contains a large brocade-covered panel. Originally, all of the arches above the balconettes were hung with festooned draperies. The floor is thickly carpeted. The original carpet was black with figures in dull gold.

Each of the quadrants contains an arched alcove headed by a ribbed half-dome. Above each alcove, the curved wall contains a single brocade-covered panel. The south alcoves are blind and were designed as niches for statuary. The north alcoves contain passages leading to an elliptical hall from which stairs descend to the basement lounges. The cream, red, and gold splendor of the marble, bronze, and crystal grand foyer provides a dazzling foretaste of the magnificent auditorium that lies beyond it.

- e. Elliptical hall: Each of the short passages leading from the north quadrants of the grand foyer descends six steps before reaching the elliptical hall, which has an east-west axis. The perimeter of the hall is divided by paired slender Corinthian pilasters into four wide bays alternating with four narrower bays. The maroon-paneled pilasters support an entablature composed of a maroon architrave, a frieze of closely-spaced cartouches, and an enriched cornice crowned by a band of acanthus molding. The entablature breaks forward over each pilaster pair. A wide but shallow cove, divided into eight alternating wide and less wide panels by broad paneled ribs springing from the entablature-breaks over the pilasters, surrounds the shallowly recessed ceiling. The wide panels of the cove contain large scroll-framed cartouche-shaped grilles. The undulating inner edge of the cove has a narrow acanthus molding, and the ribs have foliate ends. Both cove and ceiling are painted sky blue. A bronze and glass chandelier fitted with electric candles hangs from the center of the ceiling, and sconces, similarly fitted, are set between the pilasters.

The north, south, east, and west bays are wider than their alternates, which all contain openings. The southeast and southwest bays are entirely open (between the pilasters) to the passages from the grand foyer. Even the entablature architrave and frieze are omitted to enlarge those openings. The northeast and northwest bays each contain doorways framed by ornamental architraves supporting elaborately molded overdoors. Paired doors, each leaf having three maroon panels with chamfered corners, lead to a northeast storage closet and northwest to the staff stairs. The east bay contains a large round-headed arch framed by decorative molding with a mask keystone and flanked by rectangular panels. Within the arch, the wall is mirrored above a bronze radiator enclosure, the corresponding west arch is open to a small dispensary with white ceramic tile walls, a black and white floor, and a white plaster ceiling.

The north bay contains the most elaborate feature of the elliptical hall, a shallow shell-headed polished white marble niche with a molded architrave framed by engaged unfluted white marble Corinthian columns supporting entablature blocks from which rise the upward-

and-outward-curving two scrolls of a Baroque broken pediment flanking a large shell-framed cartouche, below which a smaller but equally ornate cartouche serves as a "keystone" linking the architrave of the niche to the pediment. The columns have gilded capitals and are set on low black marble blocks. On a bronze baluster-form pedestal within the niche, a bronze statuette of a water carrier formerly poured water from her jug into a low semicircular black marble basin with indirect underwater perimeter lighting. The column shafts of this Baroque composition are flanked by rectangular panels. The fountain no longer functions.

The south bay, like the southeast and southwest bays flanking it, is entirely open. Beyond the opening, a rectangular recess with delicately ornamented paneled walls and ceiling contains the wide stairway leading to the grand lounge below. At the southern end of the recess, a ribbed half-dome provides continuing headroom for the stairs. The colors used in the elliptical hall are antique cream, sky blue, maroon, and chartreuse, with a few touches of gilding. The wall panels contain red-on-gold flocked wallpaper, and the figured carpet is a rich red.

- f. Grand lounge: The grand lounge in the basement is a wide rectangular room, each wall of which is divided into three bays by shallow piers supporting a plaster frieze of bas-relief putto heads, swags, and ribbons. The rich relief ornament of the pier faces is highlighted with gilding. Except for the middle bays of the north, south, and west walls, each of the bays contains a single large plain panel of dark-stained wood capped by a narrow frieze ornamented with the carved wooden forequarters of gryphons, above which the upper third of the wall displays an oil painting imitating the Franco-Italian Renaissance style of the 16th century. Putti, swags, and figures in framed landscapes are among the motifs represented.

The middle bay of the north wall contains the wide staircase already described. At each side of the stairway there is a rectangular opening with rounded corners decorated by small brackets in the form of sea beasts with the heads of unicorns. The opening at the west (left-hand) side of the stairs leads to the vestibule of the men's suite. Opposite the stairs,

which project well into the room, an arched doorway flanked by gilt-capped engaged Corinthian columns on plinths, their shafts encased in studded strapwork, opens south into the women's lounge. An illuminated sign spelling LADIES is suspended in the archway. The plaster frieze breaks forward slightly over this entrance.

The largest decorative feature of the grand lounge, a chimneypiece of simulated limestone, fills the central bay of the west wall. The nonfunctioning fireplace opening is flanked by paired Renaissance Ionic colonettes supporting an entablature with a rinceau frieze and a denticulated cornice that forms a narrow mantel shelf. The cornice breaks forward over each set of paired colonettes. The colonettes stand on common plinths and have shafts that are fluted above high strapwork bands. Above the mantel shelf, a pair of atlantes on low plinths supports an entablature with a plain frieze and a denticulated cornice that abuts the plaster frieze around the room. The south figure carries a club and holds a shield. The north figure carries a book. Between those atlantes, the overmantel field is ornamented by a richly-mantled helmet-crested armorial shield above a cartouche linked by swags to a pair of flanking strapwork-framed armorial shields just above the mantel shelf.

The plaster ceiling is divided laterally by beams into three east-west bays. The central bay is a very low segmental vault. The flat flanking bays are subdivided by transverse beams into three sections. Each corner section has a single panel containing an elliptical air grille. The central sections of the flat bays each contain six panels framing conventionalized bas-relief ornament, and there are two larger but similar panels at each end of the segmental bay. A two-tiered brass chandelier fitted with electric candles (originally shaded) hangs from the center of the ceiling. Its light is supplemented by a pair of similarly fitted sconces on the piers flanking the fireplace. The colors of the ceiling, cream, sky blue, and chartreuse with gilt highlighting, are not original. An arabesque-figured carpet originally covered the brown composition-tile floor. Originally, this quietly rich, slightly somber Renaissance Mannerist

room contained gilded Louis XIV-style furniture including a rectangular marble-topped table, a bench, and chairs.

- g. Women's basement suite: The light and delicate Louis XV Rococo style of the handsomely proportioned women's lounge contrasts with the darker sobriety of the grand lounge. The paneled walls have light blue fields with cream and gold moldings and gilded ornaments. The ceiling is white. The north and south walls each have three wide bays flanked by narrower sub-bays. Above a low dado with panels framed by wide, shallow moldings, the wide bays contain arched panels above which are female heads garlanded by very delicately and richly modeled floral swags. The central arch of the north wall contains the arched entrance. The opposite arch contains a large single-plate mirror above a dark-veined white marble nonfunctioning mantelpiece with ormolu mounts. One of the three genuine stone mantels in the building, it is signed "BALLAGNY, Paris." The other arched panels of the north and south walls are filled with painted canvas. The vertical rectangular panels of the sub-bays have arched bases above wreath-framed floriate ovals, and each panel has above it a horizontal rectangular panel containing a bas-relief trophy of musical instruments.

The east wall has a very wide central arch with foliate spandrels and a floral and foliate "keystone." A multipaned mirror above a very low gilt-legged console shelf fills the arch. At each side of the arch, vertical rectangular panels like those just described are flanked by narrower and taller plain vertical panels. The west wall contains a narrower central archway that opens into a small rectangular vestibule and is flanked by pairs of vertical rectangular panels like those described above.

The cove of the flat ceiling is ornamented by very rich gilded rinceau panels, some of which are grilles. Below a delicate gilded bas-relief centerpiece, there hangs a two-tiered crystal chandelier. Additional light is provided by eight three-branch sconces on the vertical rectangular panels of the north and south walls. The floor is covered by plain carpeting.

The small rectangular vestibule west of the lounge has paneled walls crowned by a delicate rinceau frieze. An

elliptical dome, plain-surfaced except for a central patera, is inserted into the rectangular ceiling. A small crystal chandelier hangs from the patera. Beyond the vestibule, a small telephone room has three tiers of wall panels. The ceiling is plain except for a large patera and is surrounded by a plain wide cove. This space, lighted by a small crystal fixture below the patera, serves two paneled telephone booths.

The cosmetic room south of the vestibule is a relatively long rectangular space. Above a dado of alternating wide and narrow rectangular panels, the plaster walls are set with a total of 14 tall rectangular mirrors, one for each slender-legged semi-elliptical dressing table. Above each mirror there is a shaped hood like a drapery cornice. Two doorways, one opposite the entrance and one in the east wall, are capped by delicate gilded bas-relief Rococo scrollwork.

The ceiling is surrounded by a double cove, the lower cove ornamented with light Rococo scrollwork at the corners of the room and midpoints of the walls. The upper cove is unornamented. The rectangular ceiling contains a wide irregularly elliptical band ornamented at the midpoints of the long sides by Rococo cartouches and at the ends by very elaborate reticulated ventilating grilles. The room is lighted by two six-branch crystal and brass chandeliers and by modern wall fixtures which probably replaced electric candle brackets between the mirrors. The floor is covered by a plain carpet. The predominant color of the cosmetic room is cream with gilded reliefs. The dado and ceiling contain broad expanses of blue.

- h. Men's basement suite: The vestibule to the men's suite, entered from the opening to the left (west) of the stairs in the grand lounge, is paneled in well-polished wood of a warm brown tone. The burl-veneered panels are divided horizontally by a low dado rail. The simply ornamented white ceiling is plaster. In the west wall, a wide, shallow elliptical niche is set within an elliptical arch ornamented, in place of a keystone, by a gilded escutcheon bearing a human face flanked by small cornucopiae. Within the niche, a white marble drinking fountain is surrounded by five concave wood-framed richly gilded panels of complex arabesque bas-relief ornament. An alcove paneled to

match the vestibule and containing three telephone booths opens from the vestibule to a space underneath the stairs in the grand lounge. Opposite the alcove, the north wall of the vestibule contains the entrance to the men's smoking room.

The men's smoking room is a well-proportioned rectangular space similar in size to the women's lounge but much plainer in its style, a simple blend of early Renaissance and Moresque elements. The composition tile floor was originally carpeted. The wood-sheathed walls are divided horizontally by a low, thin dado rail, above which the large, simple rectangular panels are veneered in quartered wood set so that the pronounced grain forms a diamond, or lozenge, pattern. Within the central panel of the three-bayed east wall, there is a relatively small shallow rectangular recess headed by a cusped Islamic arch. Opposite, the door to the lavatory is centered in the west wall.

The major decorative element of the room, a massive chimneypiece of imitation stone, is centered on the north wall opposite the entrance. The Tudor-arched nonfunctioning fireplace is flanked by herm-shaped pilasters bearing Mannerist ornament and headed by scallop shells capped by diminutive Ionic capitals supporting a heavy ovolo molding. The ovolo, which forms the mantel shelf, breaks forward at each end and is ornamented by bas-relief scrollwork and three small masks in high relief. Above, the overmantel is composed of three piers flanking two panels and supporting an entablature. The stubby piers are ornamented with pendant trophies of fruit, and the entablature, which breaks forward over the piers, has a frieze of two fruit garlands between three cartouches. The molded cornice does not reach the top of the wall. Each of the two overmantel panels contains an almost circular elliptical wreath of fruit surrounded by strapwork.

Beyond the large panel at each side of the fireplace, there is a false window originally lit from within. Mullions and crossbars divide each window into four equal-sized casements filled with leaded glass quarrels, or diamond panes, which continue the lozenge motif of the wall panels at a much smaller scale. A stained-glass lozenge the size of four clear glass quarrels is centered in each of the upper casements. The corners

of the window reveals are enhanced by extremely elongated colonette motifs, and there are grille-fronted radiator recesses below each of the two sills.

The white plaster ceiling is divided into three bays by heavy transverse beams "supported" at each end by a scrolled console. The beams have single-paneled soffits. Joists span the bays between the beams. The center bay is approximately a foot higher than the other two bays, and the point of its juncture with the wall is ornamented by a shallow cusped molding. The room is lighted by two brass eight-branch chandeliers fitted with electric candles.

- i. Memorial room: Although the entire theatre was intended as a memorial to B. F. Keith, the elliptical space at the head of the grand staircase constituted a kind of sanctum sanctorum where his spotlighted bust was enshrined in a white marble niche as the focal point of the grand lobby, which was originally called the "Memorial Hall." The principal axis of the ellipse runs east-west, across the north-south main axis of the grand lobby. The walls of this elliptical memorial room are articulated into north, south, east, and west principal bays and four intermediate minor bays by eight monolithic white marble unfluted engaged columns. The columns stand on low green marble plinths and have gilded Corinthian capitals supporting an entablature with a richly ornamented pulvinated frieze and a cornice ornamented with gilded running moldings. Each of the minor bays contains a semicircular shell-headed sculpture niche, above which the wall is ornamented in gilded bas-relief by an elliptical panel containing a draped classical flower-filled urn and enframed by scrolls, architectural elements, and floral garlands.

The principal bays each contain a tall elliptical arch with a white marble architrave headed by a small, elaborately floriated scrolled keystone. The south arch, through which the stairway passes, is open to the grand foyer. The east arch is blind, the wall being covered by brocade. The west arch encloses an equally wide but lower arched opening into the mezzanine promenade. The north arch is narrower than the others and is flanked at each side by a pair of Corinthian pilasters, the outer ones halved by the engaged columns they abut. Within the arch, a white marble

half-domed semi-elliptical niche contains a square dark green marble pedestal bearing a bronze plaque inscribed BENJAMIN FRANKLIN KEITH, FOUNDER OF VAUDEVILLE, 1846-1914. The colossal bronze bust for which the pedestal was designed is now stored elsewhere.

The elliptical domed ceiling of the memorial room is surrounded by a wide and deep cove pierced by four irregularly shaped lacunars between which are scroll-framed ventilating grilles of complex diaper and palmette pattern. The lacunars above the north and south bays are longer than the others and are divided into two very irregular shapes by elaborately framed pediment and shell motifs that rise and descend to abut each other. The east and west lacunars of the cove are simpler in form. All are painted with cloudy sky effects and were originally, like the somewhat similar lacunars of the auditorium ceiling, indirectly lit. The center of the ceiling is framed by gilded concentric moldings, a lacy-surfaced ogee molding and two smaller delicate running moldings. The domed elliptical center is painted to represent a cloudy sky in which a standing draped female figure holds a wreath in each upraised hand and a seated semi-draped woman with a quill is about to write in a book. A large crystal chandelier, in which a "baby spot" to light the Keith bust was concealed, hangs from the center of the dome.

The bust of B. F. Keith has been replaced by a graceful white marble female figure signed A. FALGUIÈRE (Jean Alexandre Joseph Falguière, a French sculptor born in 1831 who died in 1900). The Falguière marble formerly stood in the center of the grand foyer on a cylindrical marble base that slowly revolved, powered by flowing water. That base, now also removed to the memorial room, is inscribed with the following Italian verse:

INVAN SCOLPISTI O ARTIFICE	(In vain you created, O sculptor
AMORE IN QUESTO LOCO	Love here in this place.
L'ACQUA CHE FRESCA VERSASI	The water here freshly flowing
FORSE NE ESTINGUE IL FUOCO	Perhaps cools its fire.

ECCO IL FONTE DEL RISO	Behold the fountain of laughter
ED ECCO IN RIO	And behold in its stream
CHE MORTALI PERIGLI	What mortal dangers
IN SE CONTIENE	Within are contained.

CHIAMASI LA RIVIERA
DELL AMORE
CHE FA CHI D'ESSA
GUSTA, INNAMORARE

It is called the shore
Of love's siren,
Who seduces
Whomever she pleases.)

Translated by Mary Morrison
(Mrs. A. Craig Morrison)

- j. Mezzanine promenade: This wide corridor-like area serves as the access route to the auditorium balcony and as an intermission lounge for balcony patrons. It connects the head of the grand stairway with the balcony passages and provides access to the mezzanine rest rooms. Its pleasant scale, delicate ornament, and position overlooking the grand foyer make the mezzanine promenade one of the most attractive spaces in the theatre.

The promenade is seven bays long. As the walls of the first, or northernmost, bay are almost non-existent, their decorative treatment is confined to the corners of the bay. At each corner, a Renaissance Ionic column stands within a re-entrant angle with pilaster responds and supports a short segment of delicate entablature. The fluting of the columns and pilasters is partially stopped by husk motifs. Each of the entablature segments has an ogee frieze decorated with Rococo cartouches and flowers below an enriched cornice. Above the entablatures, blocks support the ends of low segmental arches, their soffits ornamented by square enriched panels, that span the four sides of the bay. A balcony stairway rises through the northern archway, the eastern archway is open to the memorial room, and the western archway opens into a semi-elliptical alcove that opens, in turn, into the truncated elliptical anteroom of an enclosed passageway to the lower cross aisle of the balcony. The southern archway opens to the rest of the promenade.

The ceiling of this northernmost bay is composed of a large, shallow saucer dome supported on small triangular-paneled pendentives. The dome is richly ornamented by a very wide band of four reticulated Rococo panels, each ornamented by a cartouche, alternating with four large very elaborate cartouches. The inner frame of the band surrounds a subsidiary dome in the form of a delicately ornamented ventilating grille from which depends a bronze, glass, and parchment chandelier

composed of two superposed vasiform bowls surrounded by twelve electric candles. At the other end of the promenade, the corresponding seventh (southernmost) bay is identical with this northernmost bay in its decoration. The southern archway of the seventh bay is open to a balcony stairway and, west of it, to the women's lounge suite. The eastern archway contains the entrance to the men's rooms, and the western archway leads to an enclosed passageway to the front section of the auditorium balcony.

The second and sixth bays of the promenade are identical with each other. They are shorter and narrower than the other bays, their walls projecting boldly from the principal wall plane and thus visually distinguishing the central lounging area from the end bays. Each of the walls contains a semicircular niche flanked at each side by a simple pier, its single panel framed by waterleaf molding. The niches are headed by shell motifs composed of radiating foliated ribs and have enriched round-arched architraves. The entablature, which breaks forward over the piers, is like the entablature segments of the first and seventh bays, except that small, extremely elaborate Rococo brackets supporting the enriched cornice have been added at widely spaced intervals to the frieze.

The three long central bays of the promenade are defined by piers corresponding in width to the paired engaged columns of the grand foyer. Each pier projects very slightly from the wall plane and has an arch-headed panel flanked by pilasters of the same order as those in the first and seventh bays. The panels are framed by enriched moldings, and each is ornamented by a Rococo ellipse below its arch. The delicate entablature continues across these bays, breaking forward over the piers and pilasters. The central bay of the west wall contains an elliptical arch opening into a semi-elliptical alcove, and the walls of the two flanking bays have long rectangular panels covered with red brocade above painted paneled dadoes. Between the opposite piers, the three central bays of the east wall are entirely open onto the bronze-railed balconettes overlooking the grand foyer.

The ceiling over the three central bays is a low segmental vault. A broad transverse band composed of a square foliate panel at each end and a long rectangular reticulated panel ornamented by an extraordinarily elaborate large central cartouche, all framed by narrow bands of floral ornament, spans the promenade between each set of east and west piers. Between those transverse bands, each of the three central ceiling bays contains a large square central panel flanked at each east or west end by a narrow band of floral ornament and a large rectangular panel identical with those in the transverse bands. Thus, both transverse and lateral bands are seen as continuous elements framing the square central panels of the bays.

The vaults of the second and sixth bays are elliptical instead of segmental, a change of contour caused by their narrower span. Their ornamentation is similar to that of the three central bays, except that their reticulated rectangular panels are smaller and lack cartouches, and that they are bordered on the north and south by narrow elliptical arches whose soffits contain square foliate panels.

In all five of these bays, the square central ceiling panel contains a shallow saucer dome. (Each end bay has a saucer dome on pendentives.) These domes are the largest elements of the ceiling ornamentation, the dome in the middle (fourth) bay being the largest and most elaborate among them. It is rimmed by a narrow foliate band and contains a wide double band of delicate ornament. The other, slightly smaller, domes contain only single, rather narrow ornamental bands. The molded rims of the domes in the second and sixth bays are unornamented. Each dome has at its center a very elaborate ventilating grille from which hangs a two-tiered crystal chandelier of 16 branches supporting electric candles.

The cream, gold, and red mezzanine promenade originally had a gold-figured carpet with a black ground. The present carpet is a deep maroon color. Original furniture included a pair of marble-topped, ormolu-mounted bombé chests of drawers in the Louis XV style, and sofas and armchairs also in that style. The walls, like those of the grand foyer, were originally hung with individually lighted richly framed 19th-century salon paintings.

- k. Women's mezzanine lounge suite: Like its corresponding area in the basement, the facilities provided for the comfort of women balcony patrons consist of an entire suite of rooms, smaller than their basement counterparts but equal to them in decorative treatment. The first room of the suite, entered from the south end of the mezzanine promenade, is a circular vestibule rather simply ornamented by framed brocade panels above a paneled wooden dado. The wall is capped by a reeded frieze with a rich corona molding. The shallowly domed ceiling has a central patera from which hangs a small crystal chandelier. Opposite the entrance, somewhat toward the east, an arched entryway leads to a small triangular alcove in which there are two telephone booths, each of which has a door glazed with leaded stained glass. A doorway toward the west leads to the women's lounge.

The women's lounge is an almost rectangular room, its ends being slightly concave. It is three bays long and, basically, two bays wide, although the central entrance divides the east wall into three bays. The room is paneled in painted wood inset with seven large mirrors. The ceiling is plaster. The dado has square and rectangular panels, most with *retroussé* corners. The bays of the two longer walls are separated by slightly projecting simple paneled piers. Above the chair rail, those bays each contain a large mirror framed by a pair of "pilasters" and a round arch springing from their "capitals." The arches carry elaborate gilded plaster scroll-framed cartouches in lieu of keystones, and floral garlands are swung from the "keystones" across the spandrels of the arches. Each mirror is divided into 12 rectangular panes and five *voussoir*-shaped panes by a delicate framework of gilded metal, ornamented at its center by swags, tendrils, and *anthemia* in the neo-classical manner common to both the *Adamesque* and Louis XVI styles.

A white marble mantelpiece in the Louis XVI style is centered on the north wall below the mirror, which is slightly shorter than the others. The hearth is inset with marble of three different colors, and the fluted colonettes and lintel of the mantelpiece, which is signed "BALLAGNY, Paris," have *ormolu* mounts. The nonfunctioning fireplace is lined with delicately ornamented cast iron.

The west wall has two arched bays, the right-hand one containing a mirror like the others but framed by an architrave that surrounds the entire archway, including the dado. The similarly framed left-hand archway contains a rectangular opening (to the cosmetic room) below a blind tympanum. The "keystone" motifs flanked by swags are less elaborate than those of the side walls. Between the arches, over a rectangular panel above the dado, there is a smaller rectangular panel containing a complex bas-relief pattern of shells, scrolls, and a floral wreath framing a central boss. The east (entry) wall reverses the west-wall arrangement, the arched bay being centered and flanked by the (wider) panel sequences.

The entablature of the room has a frieze containing foliate rectangular panels separated by paired foliate-and-draped brackets between which are square shell-ornamented panels. The bracket pairs are centered over the arches and piers of the walls and support a cornice enriched by acanthus and waterleaf running moldings. The ceiling has a deep cove ornamented only by a large and elaborate reticulated Rococo cartouche in each corner and at the center point of each of the longer walls. A heavy molding surrounds the ceiling, which is also coved and has a central rosette from which hangs a two-tiered crystal chandelier with fifteen branches. Additional light is provided by two-branched sconces on the sidewall piers.

The women's suite retains its original carpet, which has a repeating scroll-and-floral-garland pattern in delicate naturalistic colors on a black ground. The original furniture, some of which remains, included armchairs, bergères, and a marble-topped rectangular center table in the Louis XVI style. A pair of framed prints hung on the wide panels of the east wall, and all the electric candles of the chandelier, sconces, and the bronze and crystal candelabra that stood on the mantelpiece had individual shades. The doorways originally had elaborately swagged draperies, as did most openings in the theatre. It should be noted that all plain blind tympana now exposed throughout the public areas of the building were originally concealed by draperies.

The third room of the women's mezzanine suite was originally furnished as a cosmetic room with white-painted slender-legged demilune dressing tables in the Louis XVI style ranged along the walls. Above a paneled dado, each side wall has five panels, each of which contains a generally rectangular mirror with rounded corners and a shaped top. Above each mirrored panel there is a horizontal panel of gilded bas-relief scrollwork. The mirrored "bays" are separated by tall, narrow pier-like panels, their upper ends ornamented by gilded fruit pendants. Each end wall has two "bays" separated by similar "pier panels." The east wall has two openings, one from the lounge and one containing a mirrored door leading to a small wedge-shaped closet. The west wall contains a mirrored "bay," and, at the right, the entrance to the lavatory.

The cosmetic room ceiling is framed by a narrow cove bounded by slender enriched moldings. The periphery of the ceiling is flat, each corner containing an ornamental circular ventilating grille. The ceiling contains a very large, shallow elliptical dome framed by a narrow ornamental band accented by complex shell-and-scroll motifs opposite the mid-point of each wall. An ornamental circular grille is centered in the dome, and from it there hangs a six-branched bronze and crystal chandelier. Additional light is supplied by bronze two-branched sconces between the mirrored panels of the walls.

A door opens from the north wall of the cosmetic room into a small rectangular room with angled corners at the end opposite the entrance. Above a paneled dado, the walls are paneled in red brocade with shell ornaments at top and bottom. The large panel opposite the entrance is filled by a mirror with a curvilinear Baroque top. The flat ceiling has a richly ornamented cove, and a six-branched crystal chandelier hangs from the central ceiling rosette. The original use of this room is undetermined: possibly it was the writing room mentioned in 1928 by the Motion Picture Herald.

1. Men's mezzanine suite: The first room of the men's suite, the smoking room, is entered from the east side of the southernmost bay of the mezzanine promenade. The men's suite occupies about the same amount of space as the women's suite, but the men's smoking room is larger than any of the women's lounges, since it is

the only lounge in its suite. It is elliptical, its axis running east-west. The walls are finished in dark polished wood above a very low light marble base, and the coved and domed ceiling is plaster. The patterned composition-tile floor was originally carpeted.

The wall has four major bays, those on the north and south being considerably longer than the east and west bays. The four intermediate minor bays are still narrower and are divided from the other bays by eight dark wood fluted Corinthian pilasters with gilded capitals. The fluting is stopped by husk motifs to the height of the chair rail. Each side (north and south) bay contains, above a paneled dado, a very large panel filled with brocade secured by narrow gilt moldings.

The northeast and northwest minor bays have arched openings into paneled semicircular niches. The archway of the southwest bay opens into an alcove containing two telephone booths, and the southeast archway leads into a vestibule to the lavatory. Opposite the entrance, the east bay contains a chimneypiece to be described presently. (The vestibule connecting the smoking room with the lavatory overlooks the lobby and contains several steps leading to the now-sealed door that was formerly an emergency exit from the adjacent now-demolished Bijou Theatre.)

The gilded plaster entablature of the smoking room is somewhat similar to that in the women's lounge. The rinceau frieze has scrolled brackets, paired over the pilasters but otherwise widely spaced, that support a deep cornice with an enriched gilded crown molding. The deep cove surrounding the central elliptical ceiling dome has a plain rib of shallow projection above each pilaster, and a foliate band and rich gilded corona terminate the cove and frame the dome, from which a 20-light bronze chandelier is suspended.

The stone chimneypiece, apparently a 16th-century Flemish Mannerist work, is the only genuinely antique architectural element in the building and is of considerable artistic interest. The brick-lined non-functioning fireplace is framed by pilaster-faced compound piers supporting a shouldered lintel above which is a mantel entablature. The overmantel contains a large panel flanked by nude male figures and crowned by a wide frieze and heavy cornice.

The pilasters ornamenting the compound piers have elaborate candelabrum motifs including putti, human-faced dolphins, winged lions, and panpipes among their elements. The compound capitals are derived from Corinthian prototypes but include satanic masks among their acanthus leaves. The shouldered lintel below the entablature, or mantel, represents a nude couple in courtship at its south end and a nude family group at the north end. The foliation behind those figures continues toward the center of the lintel as naturalistic rinceaux accented by birds eating berries. (The high quality of the carving is illustrated by the undercutting of the birds' legs, which stand free of their background.) A console accents the center of the shouldered lintel. Above, the entablature frieze is also ornamented by carved naturalistic foliage containing berry-eating birds. At the center of that frieze, a lute-playing putto, carved in the round, is seated on the console below. The richly carved cornice of the entablature forms the mantel shelf.

The large overmantel panel represents a sea battle in high relief. At either side, leaning an elbow upon the top of the panel, there stands a nude male warrior carved in full-round, his armor at his feet. More armor is represented as resting atop the panel in the overmantel frieze. The figure at the north end of the panel is younger than the other and holds a sword. A cornice with enriched dentils terminates this complex composition. The original furniture of the room was in the 16th-century Renaissance style.

- m. Auditorium: The rear of the auditorium orchestra level is approached from the main lobby by means of a semi-annular open arcaded passage which extends across the rear and along the sides under the balcony. The outer walls of the passage are ornamented by rectangular panels of deep red brocaded fabric set between cream stiles and rails with carved and gilded inner edges. Low marble balustrades and parapets are set between the paired paneled piers which support segmental arches dividing the passage from the seating area. The edges of the arches facing the rear and sides of the auditorium are richly molded and gilded. Between the capitals of the paired piers are cartouches composed of shell-and-broken-pediment motifs. The passage ceiling, above a richly molded frieze, is divided into paneled zones and is flat. On the inner (auditorium) face of

the arcade, the pier capitals support paired elongated curved console motifs between the groined vaults which effect the transition from the arches to the balcony soffit. These vaults are elaborately ornamented with gilded rococo motifs in low relief. The major portion of the balcony soffit is bordered by a broad band of plasterwork in a dentelle, or lacework, pattern edged by narrower bands of similar character. Within this border, which follows the curvilinear form of the area beneath the balcony, are three large shallow indirectly lighted lacunars ornamented by diaper patterns of demicartouche form which enframe inner domes from which depend crystal chandeliers. The surfaces of the inner domes have rays, or "glories," in low relief. Numerous small crystal-hung fixtures augment the light shed by the three principal chandeliers under the balcony. Beyond the bordering band of enriched plasterwork, the soffit of the lobed front area of the balcony is ornamented by curvilinear panels framed by cream and gilt rococo motifs.

The open arcaded passage terminates at the verge of the area below the balcony but continues as an enclosed passage at each side of the auditorium. Each enclosed passage gives access through a rectangular doorway to four stepped orchestra loges. These floor-level loges are enclosed by heavy railings pierced by vertical oval openings. Additional loge areas, or "stalls," enclosed by parapets flank the orchestra seating toward the rear of the house. Three aisles run from rear to front and divide the orchestra seating into three wide and two narrow flanking sections. There are no cross aisles. The orchestra pit is guarded by a light railing with stanchions capped by brass finials, the railing itself curving downward to suggest suspended ropes.

Beyond the balcony front, the auditorium is treated as a vast proscenium motif. The walls are canted inward toward the stage. As they are mirror images one of the other, only one will be described. The lower section acts visually as a podium for the colossal order above. It is ornamented with rectangular concave-cornered panels faced with deep red brocade. The panel stiles carry gilded pendant husk motifs. A large panel near the stage but angled toward the audience is flanked by pilaster motifs and contains a richly framed and ornamented lower panel above which is a

well for displaying signs. This well was originally illuminated and used to announce each vaudeville performer or act. The lower wall zone terminates in a dentelle, or lacework, frieze and a small molded cornice which runs across the lower edge of the proscenium box. The reveal of the proscenium itself, placed between outer and inner draperies, is treated as an elongated panel ornamented by a run of cartouches bearing trophies of musical instruments and surrounded by rectangles of foliate mantling. These ornaments are gilded against a dark background.

Above the "podium" base, the major element of the wall treatment is an immense Palladian motif. The order is a variant of the Composite order, with female heads placed between the capital volutes. The fluted shafts have stop fluting of gilded husk motifs above the bases and below the capitals. The balcony and proscenium ends of the wall are terminated by re-entrant pilasters, the other two major supports being engaged columns. Pilasters and columns support enriched entablature sections with friezes in high relief and modillioned cornices, from which spring the central semicircular arch of the Palladian motif and the long segmental arches of the true proscenium and its larger counterpart at the balcony line. The wall segments flanked by the pilasters and columns are treated as elaborately framed elongated panels headed by indirectly lit gilded shells. The box, projecting between the engaged columns, seats eight and has concave ends and a convex center in plan. The box parapet is decorated by three horizontal bands of gilded foliate relief with a central cartouche and is capped by a low pipe railing.

The wall behind the box is divided into two comparatively narrow sections and a wide central section by two elongated lavishly ornamented paneled pilasters. These narrow pilasters "support" a Baroque cornice in the form of a broken pediment, the irregular volutes of which are crowned by an elaborately mantled female head. The cornice soffit has a complex pendant at each corner which partially masks the pilaster capital behind it. Behind the cornice, within the splayed reveal of the "Palladian" arch, is a half dome, its base composed of bands of glyphs, leafage, and bosses. The half dome itself is made up of segments of grillage, the supporting ribs of which rise to uphold an

elaborate Baroque cream and gilt urn finial. Pilasters, cornice, and dome are designed to comprise a pseudo-baldachin motif. The richly framed rectangular entrance of the box, placed between the pilasters which "support" the pseudo-baldachin, is flanked by freely interpreted Baroque herm motifs facing inward. The entrance is crowned by elaborate mantling terminating in a female head set against a subsidiary cornice. Above the cornice is a large shell arch flanked by diapered spandrels and headed by a complex cartouche with floral mantling placed before another minor cornice. Above that cornice is a diapered organ grille ornamented with an oval patera set vertically. The upper portions of narrow panels flanking the pilasters, and the soffit of the cornice below the half dome, also have grilles. Each pilaster has a crystal sconce, and a large crystal chandelier hangs above the box.

As previously noted, the entire area beyond the balcony is designed as a very large-scaled proscenium element. Two three-centered arches, their soffits richly ornamented, spring from the cornices of the Palladian motifs at the sides, one spanning the stage, and the other, larger arch spanning the space at the balcony line. The ceiling between the arches therefore, is, in effect, a vast splayed proscenium arch intersected at the sides by the arches of the Palladian motifs. Two broad bands of gilded rococo ornament on a cream ground adjoin the soffits of the inner and outer proscenium arches, the band above the stage being splayed. Two transverse bands of the same pattern divide the ceiling into three principal sections. Those flanking the central section are trapezoidal in effect, although their sides are parallel and their lower edges concave. Those sections contain grilles richly framed by rinceau moldings. The larger, rectangular central section contains an irregularly but symmetrically framed Rococo lacunar within which is an indirectly lighted painting depicting partially draped female figures on clouds in a blue sky.

The outer surface of the proscenium, as seen from the balcony, has very narrow spur walls faced by slender Rococo ornamented panels which have the visual effect of superposed pilasters separated vertically by a fragment of the returned Palladian cornice. The comparatively small spandrels of the proscenium arch are

ornamented by bosses mantled in rinceau foliage. The arch itself rises partially into the entablature above it. At the center, the cornice breaks upward in a pair of irregular volutes supporting a Baroque flower-filled vessel and floral mantling. The volutes enclose an escutcheon bearing a rayed Apollo head. Garland swags depend from the escutcheon, their lower edges descending below the arch.

The balcony front is concave in plan, receding toward the center in a gentle arc. The parapet has twelve lobes, ten of which are elliptical in plan, the one at either end being semicircular. The balcony parapet thus resembles a series of box fronts separated by narrow straight sections. The "box fronts" are richly molded, having wide and narrow horizontal bands of foliate design interrupted vertically by two console motifs. Each lobe has a center cartouche bearing a small female head, except the end lobes, which have helmeted heads. The flat sections between the lobes have larger Rococo cartouches without heads. The parapet is capped by a low pipe railing.

There are three levels of stepped balcony seating, a three-row mezzanine, a fifteen-row intermediate section, and a six-row rear area. These are separated by two wide cross aisles guarded by pipe railings. Five aisles ascend from the front to a rear passage. The identical side walls are divided into upper and lower zones by continuations of the Palladian-motif entablatures of the proscenium area. Each lower wall section is simply treated, having three deep red brocade-covered panels separated by two pilaster strips ornamented as panels. The panel nearest the mezzanine has a simply molded arch-headed entrance to the first cross aisle and is flanked by crystal sconces. The access passage beyond this entrance has paneled dadoes and brocade-covered upper panels. The rise of the intermediate seating cuts across the bases of the second and third panels, making the upper one triangular. The second cross aisle is at the base level of the upper wall zone.

The upper wall zone is composed of a nineteen-bay colonnade surrounding the balcony on three sides. The transitions from sides to rear are curved. The colonnade supports a full entablature above which is a coved arcade which makes the transition from wall to

ceiling. The first four bays at either side are separated by paired columns on podia between which are slightly convex balustrades. The bays are closed off by deep red draperies before which hang large crystal chandeliers. The order is a lavish Baroque variant derived ultimately from the Composite order. The lower thirds of the shafts are richly banded with gilded dentelle ornament. The flutes above are stopped at two levels by husk motifs, giving the effect of additional banding. The capitals have swag-hung volutes between which are heads. The fifth bays from the front, also lit by crystal chandeliers, are the entrances to the second cross aisle. At the rearward sides of these bays the columnar treatment alters, paired piers being substituted for the columns. The three bays at the extreme rear are separated by single piers. The piers are paneled, ornamented by gilded Rococo motifs, have simpler versions of the column capitals, and bear crystal-hung sconces. Those at the fifth bays are set on podia equalling in height the lower banding of the columns. The passage behind the bays has pilaster responds of the same design as the pier panels. The entablature (which continues above the proscenium area) has closely spaced elaborate gilded brackets of vertical console form which are paired above the columns and piers. The metopes, also gilded, are ornamented with foliate mantling surrounding pan pipes, bosses, and other motifs.

The transition from wall to ceiling is effected by an indirectly lit arcade, partly blind and partly open to a narrow service passage, the piers of which are placed over the paired columns and pilasters, except at the front, where they are supported visually by the proscenium arch and entablature. The central arch above the proscenium is somewhat wider than the others. Above the three bays at the extreme rear is a very wide elliptical arch embracing a tripartite opening divided by mullions designed as herm motifs which terminate in garlanded heads. The opening is closed off by the front wall of the projection room. The arches are splayed and are framed by enriched moldings, the inner frames having swag-hung central bosses which project partially below the arches themselves. The outer frames have equally elaborate mantled bosses which thrust up into the ceiling cornice. The arch soffits are ornamented by quasi-

crescent-shaped Rococo panels. The outer arch frames spring from splayed podia between which are highly ornamented low convex parapets, each with a central cartouche bearing a small head. Between the elaborately ornamented podia and the arcade spandrels are shallow shell-headed niches with volute-based frames terminating in heads. The upper fields of the spandrels have large lavishly framed bosses, the frames penetrating the ceiling cornice.

The balcony ceiling is divided into two principal concentric zones, a wide framing band of ornament, and a complex central lacunar. The relatively small-scaled ceiling cornice is composed of two zones of running moldings and a cornice element with very elaborate modillions between which are paterae. Adjoining the cornice is the broad band, composed of bosses and curvilinear panels alternating with diapered ventilating grilles, the whole set in a linkage of Rococo motifs. The band of bosses and grilles borders a very large rectangular area, the rear corners of which are curved. Within the rectangle is the heavy oval frame of the lacunar, the spandrel areas between frame and band being diapered. The most notable ceiling motif, the large indirectly illuminated lacunar, has, in effect, two concentric frames, the inner one supported by eight spanning elements. The outer frame is composed of glyph-ornamented and foliate running moldings and a deep inner cove of rinceau pattern interrupted at intervals by small bracket motifs and by eight cartouches, the four larger of which thrust upward and inward into the periphery of the lacunar. The inner frame is supported by eight spanning elements between which are eight indirectly lit panels of irregular contour. The periphery is pierced by small irregular oval openings and suggests a railing in effect. The four larger spanning elements are composed of framed richly paneled half-dome motifs which are open at their bases and are flanked by foliated consoles. The consoles are flanked, in turn, by irregular panels with outer edges of inverted console form. Above the frames of the half-dome motifs are draped and winged heads with rinceau surrounds, the frames of which arch upward beyond the plane of the inner lacunar frame. The four smaller spanning elements are set on the main axes of the auditorium. They are composed of console-framed arches supporting inverted shell motifs above

which are cartouches with female heads. The cartouches are flanked by floral cornucopiae and foliate sprays. Above the cartouches are broken pediments the crests of which rise above the plane of the inner frame. The frame itself is oval and has eight inner lobes where it is intersected by the spanning elements. It is composed as an entablature motif with a glyph and enriched running moldings. The entire lacunar enframement is lavishly embellished with gilded relief against a cream ground. The ceiling above the central opening is painted to represent a background of cloudy sky before which scantily draped female figures assume Delsartean poses as others, seated, pipe the dance. The sky areas of the balcony and proscenium lacunars add a cool blue note to the predominantly cream, gold, and rich red interior of this sumptuously palatial auditorium.

4. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The building is heated by steam supplied by the City of Boston. The boilers in the building remain unused, a stack permit having been denied during construction. The air conditioning and ventilation were originally described as follows:

A new plan in ventilation is also in use. Fresh air is taken in through air chambers at the top of the building, washed and brought to proper temperature, then admitted to the auditorium from in front of the audience, traveling down and back, eliminating all drafts. (Motion Picture Herald, November 24, 1928, p. 43)

- b. Stage equipment: The original stage equipment was described as follows:

On the stage, wood wings and foliage borders have been eliminated. With the exception of one profile top interior, everything is contained in overhead curtains, highly decorative and with foliage borders. The backstage electrical equipment is operated from a switchboard said to be the largest theatrical switchboard in the world. (ibid.)

The Keith Memorial will present no sound pictures, for some time at least. There has been no wiring done, nor any provision made for such equipment. "The silent drama" is to remain silent, so far as the present policy of the new theatre is concerned. (op. cit., p. 40)

The house lighting has been described as an integral part of the decorations. There was no organ in the theatre in 1978, when the Opera Company of Boston took possession. The original organ, a 3-manual 20-rank Wurlitzer instrument, was purchased in 1973 by Dennis Hedberg of Portland, Oregon, and was removed in 1975.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: The B. F. Keith Memorial Theatre (Opera House) faces east on Washington Street in the middle of a commercial block in the heart of Boston's central retail business district. Its secondary entrance in a separate building faces west on Tremont Street in the midst of a commercial block facing Boston Common. Mason Street, which passes between the two blocks and over the disused tunnel connecting the theatre and the secondary entrance building, is a narrow street used primarily by vehicles servicing Washington and Tremont Street business establishments. All facades of the two buildings are fronted by concrete sidewalks. There is no landscaping of any kind.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of a Historic American Buildings Survey project to record selected representative examples of moving picture theatre design in the United States during the first third of the 20th century. Begun under the general supervision of James C. Massey, it was continued under Dr. John Poppeliers, succeeding Chief of the Survey. Twenty photographs by C. John MacFarlane, a Belmont, Massachusetts, photographer, were taken in 1970. Eight historic photographs from the collection of Terry Helgesen of Los Angeles, California; two from the Theatre Historical Society, Notre Dame, Indiana (courtesy of Brother Andrew Corsini), and one from Denys Peter Myers were borrowed by Mrs. Wheeler for photocopying. Thirteen blueprints of original architectural drawings by the office of Thomas W. Lamb were given to the Survey by Sack Theatres, Inc. through Mrs. Wheeler's initiative. The historical data were prepared by A. Craig Morrison and augmented by Mrs. Wheeler and Denys Peter Myers. The architectural data were prepared by A. Craig Morrison and Denys Peter Myers. The revised final text was written by Denys Peter Myers.